

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

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**RECONSTRUCTING CAREERS - NEW DEALS FOR OLD:
RHETORIC OR REALITY ?**

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

PhD THESIS

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Reconstructing Careers - New Deals for Old: Rhetoric or Reality ?

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ABSTRACT

From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s economic and technological forces created significant pressure on organisations to downsize and delay in order to maximise asset utilisation, retain competitive advantage and, literally in some cases, survive. In the wake of these changes it seemed the classic, bureaucratic organisational career was also under threat of survival as organisations were no longer able to offer a job for life, and with it the promise of regular hierarchical progression. Thus, the 'death' of the traditional career was proclaimed. As a result, academics began to assert that we were witnessing a fundamental redefinition of the individual-organisation relationship, and that the new imperative was to re-contract with individuals, rebuild trust, and thus strike up a new deal. This talk of the demise of the career and, with it, the old, relational 'deal' began to take on the character of a universalistic truth, and by the mid-1990s academics and practitioners alike were widely announcing the arrival of 'the New Deal'. This research offers a challenge to this pervasive rhetoric. It is argued that analysis of employees' own talk on the issue at an important historical point in the new deal storyline indicates a much more contextually-specific and emergent phenomenon than the rhetoric implies.

In pursuit of this broad aim, the research takes a contextualist-interpretivist, theory-generating approach. More specifically, from the perspective of Social Constructionism it is argued that we can only talk of the emergence of new deals when such deals are part of employees' daily realities, as evinced by their talk about careers. The foundation of the research is twenty four semi-structured interviews, coupled with in-depth analyses of the two case study organisations in which this data were generated: the Bank of England and IBM (UK) Limited. Discourse Analysis represents the theoretical/methodological lens through which the data are analysed, and thus the actual talk of subjects in each case study organisation is presented in order to consider the organisation and function of their talk. The emphasis, however, is on the discourses evident in (or absent from) subjects' talk and, in particular, the vocabularies of 'new' and 'old' deals.

The contributions of the research can be expressed as follows. First, by catching employees at the cusp of the change process in each of the case study organisations, the research makes a unique, processual contribution to our understanding of the apparent demise of the 'old deal' and emergence of the 'new' in two specific contexts. By examining individuals' own talk of these changes, and of the implications for their careers, it shows how their understandings were changing. Second, the research points up the distinction between linguistic elements (discourses, interpretative repertoires, vocabularies) that were context-specific, and thus culturally formed, versus those that were transcontextual and emergent in subjects' talk and which were therefore likely to be present, or continue to emerge, after the new deal had become a 'reality'. Thus, the research indicates how assumptions about careers change over the longer term and how new perspectives do and will continue to emerge. Third, the research makes a methodological contribution to the field, principally in its illustration of the application of Discourse Analysis and its ability to raise 'novel' questions for those concerned with the nature of the subjective career.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people whose support and encouragement I wish to recognise - without them, I would not have had the energy to 'keep on keeping on' through the past seven years.

First, I wish to thank my co-supervisors at the early stages of the research process, namely Silvana di Gregorio and Shaun Tyson. In addition, I wish to thank the various members of my Review Panels, including Gerry Johnson and Val Singh. Particular thanks, however, go to Mary-Jo Hatch who, as a Panel member at my second review, made many significant and enduring contributions to my thinking, and helped me to marshal the courage to pursue what I really wanted to say all along. I especially want to thank her for advising me never to be concerned if the writing process dries up from time to time: "the good ideas always come back" she said - I hope at least some of them are evident here.

I also want to express sincere thanks to Susan Vinnicombe who, in her various roles, has consistently supported me, offered encouragement, and demonstrated confidence and faith which, I am sure, has been above the call of duty on many occasions in this lengthy process.

I also want to pay tribute to some of my former research colleagues who challenged me (often quite rigorously) and thus helped shape my early thoughts, especially Phyl Hughes and Andy Bailey.

And I wish to pay tribute to the patience and good humour of my friends and work colleagues who, on many occasions I'm sure, never thought I would finish "this thing" ! I especially wish to thank Peter Robinson for his creative energy and 'intellectual playfulness' which served to re-ignite my enthusiasm for this thesis at a particularly low point, a few years ago.

As a former Cranfield colleague of mine once wrote in the introduction to her own thesis, "a PhD does not take place in a social vacuum" - how true ! During the past seven years much has happened, including house moves, job changes, and myriad personal milestone events. The write-up year in particular was tough, and made tougher no doubt by the arrival of my beautiful daughter - Milly. The year didn't let up, however, and through a large and complex merger at work and significant family illnesses, my commitment to this thesis was, at times, severely tested.

Two people, however, sustained me most through not only the testing times of 2001 but also the entire, sometimes turbulent, period of the research. The first is Veronica Hope-Hailey, who in the final year or so was a great source of strength and encouragement. In short, if Voltaire was right, and we should judge a person not on the basis of their answers, but the quality of their questions, then I am indeed indebted to Veronica: she asked *great* questions !

Finally, the second, and most important, person has been my wife, Vikki. Without her support and encouragement and, in the latter stages of write-up, valuable commentary on early drafts of the thesis, I would not be writing these words of thanks today.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather

To be effective, career management needs to encompass an awareness of the significance of the 'subjective' career, to contextualise the individual, and to pay attention not only to objective movements and the outer signs of career, but also to the 'story' the individual weaves about them. This means that more needs to be known about this dimension of career, and that research approaches appropriate for the study of subjective experiences have to be developed and used.

Audrey Collin (1995) *The Changing Nature of Careers: What is a career ?* (p.3)

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PREFACE

"Specifying the *natural history* of the research - its original purpose, and how it evolved over time - is an important part of the research report."

(Silvana di Gregorio)¹

Remember: You're in a Process

A PhD means different things to different people. To some, it represents an academic right of passage, the result of which is a license to practice and thus, importantly, the right to judge others' doctoral work. To others, especially those carrying out research part time while employed outside academe, oftentimes it is seen either as a lever for career development or, more commonly, an opportunity for personal learning and development.

For me, the PhD initially was a career lever, since I was effecting a career shift from marketing into HR, and wanted to broaden and deepen my theoretical understanding of that discipline and, specifically, the field of career theory and development. Over time, however, its meaning to me has changed. About a year into my research, I began to entertain the possibility of an academic career, albeit not in the short-mid term, but rather later in life, once I had applied my research as a practitioner. Latterly, its meaning has changed again, and now as I am deeply embedded in the process of writing up my thesis, it occurs to me that the PhD has been a significant vehicle for personal and intellectual development.

My learning has been multifaceted and, in many ways, profound and enduring. I have learned, for example, that my expectation on registration of completing inside two years was naive. In the event, completing the thesis has taken considerably longer, and has certainly been a humbling process. I have also learned to be cautious of the rhetoric of research training programmes which suggest the research process is linear and incremental. In reality, I have found myself continually deconstructing and reconstructing the thesis (often fundamentally), and I have come to the view that research is not about taking a well defined idea or hypothesis and sticking with it over the years: instead, things change - specifically, the vocabulary I have appropriated over time which has enabled me to articulate, with

¹ Course notes, the Cranfield Research Training Programme, spring 1995.

increasing clarity, the evolving sense of what I wanted to say all along. In other words, as my former supervisor said many times: “remember: you're in a process”.

The research journey has not, therefore, always been an easy one and, on three occasions at least, I have come very close to giving it all up as a bad idea. Apart, of course, from the support of my wife, colleagues, friends and supervisors, two things in particular have sustained me. The first has been writing. In short, I was persuaded early on by Weick (1995) that I cannot possibly hope to know what I think until I see myself write it. As a result, I have written continuously over the past six years, and published a number of papers (albeit to the distraction of the thesis itself at times). Second, I have taken the view that I also cannot hope to know what I think until I hear myself say it (or 'teach' it). As such, I have taken every opportunity to present to a variety of audiences. (My presentation to the Cranfield MPhil/PhD students in September 1996 was pivotal in rebuilding my confidence. Even the title of my seminar speaks volumes about my state of mind at that time: *Courage in the Face of Chaos and Uncertainty: Getting un-stuck*).

Breaking Free From an MBA

For at least the first year of my research, a significant impediment to my progress was the enduring influence of my MBA. Specifically, while I spent a considerable amount of time between November 1994 and June 1995 reading everything I could on career theory, I did not read widely enough in other areas, and thus remained philosophically naive. In short, my MBA interests perpetuated a positivistic/Realist view of my research: a position which is somewhat antithetical to the one in which I now find myself.

The MBA began as an investigation of critical success factors in graduate careers, and ended by positing a developmental model of the 'typical' graduate career, which I called the *Graduate Lifecycle Model*. As my PhD research progressed, therefore, I spent a disproportionate amount of time reading the career stage/phase literature and, influenced by my then supervisor, the life span developmental psychology literature. The net effect of this was that I spent much of the first six months considering ways of generating a developmental model of the graduate career, and this subsequently led to my paper *Career as a Vehicle for the Realisation of Self* in Career Development International, 1997 Vol. 2(5).

Over time, however, it became clear to me that this particular direction would ultimately be unsatisfying. It might, of course, have secured a PhD (since there is clearly an opportunity to make a contribution to the literature in this area), but I was finding the research process sterile. In short, I did not think it was interesting to embark upon probably dozens of interviews in the hope of 'proving' my hypothesis, particularly as I began to realise that everyone I spoke to told a somewhat different story about the time-bound evolution of their career and the time-critical incidents which had shaped their experience.

I recall a conversation with Silvana di Gregorio (then my supervisor) in May 1995 which probably kick-started the process of re-thinking what I was doing. In short, she suggested it might be dangerous to over-generalise about the normative nature of graduates' career development since the phenomenon I was observing was likely to be cohort specific. Assuming that to be the case, I slowly began to realise that psychology and organisation theory alone would be of limited value in describing (and explaining) what I was observing. Instead, I needed to consider things from a broader, social-psychological perspective.

Also around this time, Mary-Jo Hatch (who was later to have a significant influence on me as a member of my review panel) joined Cranfield, and gave her inaugural lecture on, broadly speaking, postmodernist views on organisation theory. In passing, she made reference to Foucault, of whom I had not heard at that time, but subsequently came to read. Of particular interest to me was Foucault's position on social reality, and the argument that truth is historically, socially and culturally specific².

I was therefore coming to the view that I had to consider the importance of political, economic, and social issues, as well as the impress of organisational culture³. And so I came to the (tentative) conclusion that life structures are not biologically determined, but rather socially mediated and thus context-specific⁴.

² See Foucault (1972).

³ It is worth noting also that I decided not to pursue international culture differences, though it later became clearer that, to a large extent, the particular notion of (bureaucratic) careers considered in this thesis is, arguably, an artifact of Western, capitalist societies.

⁴ I was later to discover that Kram (1996) and Collin (1998) have expressed similar concerns about the usefulness of developmental models to assist our understanding of the complexities of the changing organisational career.

Leuven and Beyond

"When students of the management and business sciences take courses in the philosophy of science they often come out wondering about the status of their disciplines."

(Elfring, *et al* 1995: 13)

Without doubt the most important turning point came in July 1995 when I attended the 4th EDAMBA summer school at the University of Leuven. Here, I was one of thirty five doctoral students from more than a dozen of the major business schools in Europe. I was thus exposed to a rich variety of stimuli but, specifically, to Social Constructionism, social theory, politics, language, and discourse; and to the work of the likes of Foucault⁵, Habermas⁶ and Wittgenstein⁷. For the first time I began to gain a broader appreciation for non-Anglo-American approaches to doctoral research, and began to see the value in taking a more eclectic view of my work.

On return from Leuven, I gave up my pursuit of a developmental theory of graduate careers, and instead focused on three things: (i) how, by developing my network *outside* Cranfield, I could expose myself to philosophical and methodological perspectives which were not part of my daily discourse; (ii) an answer to the question as to why I was finding traditional approaches to career theory unsatisfying⁸; and (iii) identifying a different issue/debate I could speak to in the careers literature.

So far as my first objective was concerned, two things helped considerably. First, I approached Robin Wooffitt at the University of Surrey and asked if I could attend his ten week lecture series, *Discourse & Documentary Analysis*, beginning in September 1995. This I did, and was subsequently introduced to conversation analysis (Sacks, 1972; 1974; 1979), and reintroduced to ethnomethodology⁹ (Garfinkel, 1967). Second, I attended a three day seminar and one day conference run by Ian Parker of Manchester Metropolitan University, which included contributions by Vivien Burr and Jonathan Potter (key authors on Social Constructionism and Discourse Analysis respectively). This proved to be a fascinating

⁵ See Foucault (1970; 1972).

⁶ See Habermas (1972).

⁷ See Wittgenstein (1953).

⁸ See also Arthur & Rousseau (1996); Collin (1998); Mallon (1998).

⁹ My co-supervisor Shaun Tyson also suggested Garfinkel (and Douglas) to me at this time, though it was not until later that I could fully appreciate why he had done so.

introduction to a *much* broader array of subjects, including the politics of discourse, power, sexuality and identity.

So far as objective two is concerned, I gradually formed the view that, on the one hand, the careers literature over-emphasises individual differences, pays too much attention to the psychology of the 'individual', and typically separates the individual from her/his context. On the other hand, I concluded that career theorists typically reify the organisation, tend to have an intra-firm focus, and (with the exception of the literature on psychological contracting), are largely unconcerned with individual-organisation interdependency¹⁰.

In other words, I was beginning to appreciate what Shaw (1931) called the *situational* and *relational* components of career, and was appreciating the contextual specificity of organisational careers. I also revisited Hughes (1937) and began to think less of the objective career and more of the subjective. And this, along with my developing understanding of the role of language in structuring our social reality, brought me to the conclusion that organisational discourse has perhaps a greater influence on the subjective career than biology or intra-individual psychology.

So far as objective three was concerned, the publication of Herriot & Pemberton's (1995) *New Deals: The Revolution in Managerial Careers*, and the 'New Deal in Employment' conference at City University Business School in December 1995, made it obvious which 'conversation' I should join. Although it took some time to refine my position, it became clear there was an opportunity to contribute to the rhetoric/reality debate concerning the end of the traditional, bureaucratic career and the emergence of 'new deals'. This seemed particularly appropriate given what I regarded as an almost ubiquitous acceptance (primarily by practitioners) of the emergence of this 'new reality' and, notably, little in the way of a reconceptualisation (by academics) of the meaning and usefulness of the career concept in light of this apparent 'new deal'. More importantly, perhaps, I observed an opportunity to examine the way(s) in which individuals were responding to the rhetoric of a 'new deal' – i.e. how they were participating in the (re)construction of their careers in light of apparent changes in the rules of the 'career game' [Adamson, Doherty & Viney, 1998].

¹⁰ Again, this is a view I later found to be shared by others, e.g. Collin (1998).

Evolving Research Questions

Having moved far beyond my early 'Realist project', my research questions therefore took on a wholly different flavour by end 1995. Influenced to some extent by my interest in social psychology and the work of the Chicago School in the early 1920s (see Chapter 2), I became interested in the impact of significant others (particularly line managers) on individuals' objective and subjective careers. Influenced largely by the work of Arnold & Davey (1992a,b) and Herriot *et al* (1993), I also became interested in how graduates' career expectations change over time, and thus the processes by which such change comes about.

However, influenced by my reading of Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology, Hermeneutics and Social Constructionism, I also became interested in how people make sense of their work career, and by extension their life career. And, having realised the importance of context, I became interested in the changing nature of organisations and, as a consequence, the impact of organisational context - (or, more accurately, the discursive context of organisations) - on individuals' (career) self identity.

These concerns therefore combined to create three different perspectives to my interests between end 1995 and end 1997. First, situational issues - the organisational context in which the work history evolves; and the situational specificity of the career story (its 'indexicality'). Second, chronological issues - the evolution of the career; the historical specificity of the career story; and, in particular, the emergence of new rhetoric / new discourses over time which allow us to understand and explain our context and thus 're-language' (reconstruct) our careers. Third, relational issues – primarily the 'relationship' between 'subject' and 'organisation', mediated by the discursive context.

So, Where Have I Ended Up ?

In this thesis I support Nicholson & West's (1989:181) assertion that "work histories are lifetime journeys, and careers are the tales that are told about them". It follows that I am interested in how *career stories* are constructed, what discourses inhabit them, and (to some

extent) the functions they serve¹¹. Second, (as outlined above) I am concerned with how the meanings of career change and evolve over time, and their implications for self identity¹². And third, I am concerned with the broadening of methodological approaches in the field of career theory and development, especially insofar as such broadening serves to expose the contextual specificity of the subjective career.

Put more simply, from a theory-building perspective I am interested in a) what people talk about; b) how they construct their career stories; and c) how they participate in the construction of their careers and, ultimately, self identity.

This thesis, therefore, is an attempt to lay some ground work, and to begin to understand the extent to which we should support or challenge the rhetoric of the 'new deal'. It is an attempt to begin the process of unraveling the situational specificity of careers/career stories, in order to get us to a point from which I, or others, may then go on to investigate and understand more fully the process of taking on a new careers rhetoric and the impact of this on fractured self identities - in other words, the process of literally reconstructing the career self identity.

A Footnote

In order to guide the reader from a philosophical and theoretical perspective, I shall assert now my view that the career has no fixed or permanent reality, rather it is continually deconstructed and reconstructed in order to perform a particular function at a particular time, in a particular social context - its contingent 'reality', therefore, is brought into view for us in the moment of its articulation. It follows that I do not view the telling of career stories as a purely representational act (revealing to us the 'truth' of one's experience) but rather a performative act, which constructs a *version* of truth which, in turn, brings off specific effects for the speaker - e.g. explaining, excusing, justifying and so on¹³.

¹¹ These interests in the constructive and performative qualities of talk align with the tradition in discourse analysis represented by Potter & Wetherell (1987), having its roots in, for example, speech act theory (Austin, 1962) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). See Chapter 3.

¹² The interest in the historicity and evolution of career, and its impact on the self is broadly aligned with the tradition in discourse analysis represented by Parker (1992), having its roots in Foucauldian analyses. See Chapter 3.

¹³ See Semin & Mansted (1983).

It also follows that I believe our research efforts should not be distracted by how the work history is built up and objectified over time, but instead should be concerned with the culturally embedded nature of the career, and thus how subjective careers are now being reconstructed in light of the apparently changing assumptions about the nature of contemporary organisational careers. In this regard I agree wholeheartedly with the various writings of Collin c.1995-98 - to which I shall refer later – that there is considerable room in the career theory literature for more research of a contextualist-interpretivist nature:

“Interpretative research approaches, which are based on assumptions very different from those prevailing in the [career theory] field are... valuable because they allow both the contextualisation of career and an understanding of its subjective dimension... Existing, largely positivistic, career theories are ill-prepared to incorporate [the] newly emerging constructions of career, and scientific research methodologies cannot grapple with the study of them. The study of career will have to develop new and appropriate approaches... [Researchers] will also have to address... their basic concepts of the individual in context and of the dialectical relationship between objective and subjective career.”

[Collin, 1998: 416-420].

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The New Social and Techno-Economic Reality

In recent times most Western nations have experienced relatively consistent (albeit slow) economic growth, supported by low rates of inflation. However, while it may seem on the surface that the boom and bust cycles of the past are now a mere cautionary tale [Herriot, Hirsh & Reilly 1998], the forces of globalisation, de-regulation, intense price-led competition, and the explosion in information and communications technologies continue to de-emphasise traditional organisational concerns with co-ordination and control and are, quite literally, re-shaping our notions of organisation and organising: as Peters (1987) might have put it, chaos rules !

As a result, our traditional paradigms are being challenged fundamentally. In particular, the impact of technology has served to change fundamentally our concepts of distance and time, and thus has re-shaped both organisations and markets; the proliferation of virtual organisations (or, increasingly, organisations constituted as collectives of virtual teams) has challenged our basic legal and social definitions of organisations; and, as technology impacts internal organisational boundaries, the rigidity, hitherto, in organisational layers and functions, is diluting [Heckscher & Donnellon, 1994].

In parallel, we are (arguably) emerging from a *fin de siècle* crisis (Mestrovic, 1991) and thus are witnessing something of a destruction of social capital, with an increase in cynicism toward and lack of trust in the nation state and social, legal and familial institutions [Herriot, Hirsh & Reilly 1998]. We might thus also argue that this *new*, post-modern reality is re-igniting, at the individual level, a deep ontological crisis [Giddens, 1976].

While much of this might, in retrospect, have been predictable, Ridderstrale & Nordstrom (2000) argue that the sheer scale and speed of social, economic and, in particular, technological change is what makes *this* industrial revolution so different. As they suggest, the world of 'funky business' now means that no single theory of organisation will be sufficient to guide us, and we will have to embrace radically new ways of working and organising.

The New Organisational Reality

Since the decline of owner-managed, entrepreneurial firms at the end of the *first* industrial revolution, the dominant organisational form - in Western, capitalist economies at least - has been the bureaucratic, multi-unit or divisionalised form. This has been the case given organisations' common objectives of maximising efficiency through specialisation and effecting control through hierarchy. These dominant forms have given rise to bureaucratic/hierarchical notions of organisational careers, and it is these conceptions which have long represented the common view of the work career [Kanter, 1989]. It also follows that a collective social sense has been deeply embedded that career *success* is about rising up organisational hierarchies [Inkson, 1995; Pahl, 1995].

In order to support the need for efficiency and control, organisations traditionally created rigid career structures, supported by formal and bureaucratic processes in order, in part, to create the illusion of stability and predictability [Adamson, Doherty & Viney, 1998]. Career opportunity structures were thus transparent, with career paths explicitly marked out: there were clear *routes to the top* [Nicholson, 1984]. As a consequence, career progression has, historically, been as much about age and tenure as ability [Lawrence, 1988, 1990; Nicholson, 1993]. Now, however, business conditions are dictating that companies be more responsive and flexible, and this requires what Peters & Waterman (1982) described as 'loose-tight structures', characterised by 'entrepreneurial spirit' [Kanter, 1989]. Thus, while some of the old career systems and processes remain in force, they are now intended to serve very different purposes [Adamson, Doherty & Viney, 1998].

It has therefore been argued that the nature of careers has changed fundamentally [Handy, 1994; Bridges, 1995; Brousseau *et al*, 1996]. In particular, it is argued that the bureaucratic organisational career is no longer relevant to today's organisational reality [Kanter, 1989; Gowler & Legge, 1989; Bird, 1994; Siow, 1994; Inkson, 1995; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Nicholson, 1996]. The *onward and upward career* is 'dead' [Williams, 1984; Golzen & Garner, 1990; Waterman *et al*, 1994; Holbeche, 1995]. Instead, career paths have become increasingly blurred (Inkson & Coe, 1993) and, in some contexts, it is argued that the career ladder has literally 'vanished' [Tyson, 1995].

It follows that academics assert we are witnessing a fundamental redefinition of the individual-organisation relationship, and that the new organisational imperative is to re-contract with individuals, rebuild trust, and thus strike up a 'new deal' [Herriot &

Pemberton, 1995]. Others go further. As Ridderstrale & Nordstrom (2000) suggest: "Soon, the emphasis will be on getting a life instead of a career, and work will be viewed as a series of gigs". That being the case, our fundamental assumptions about the work career will have to change, as will organisations' career management practices. It could thus be argued that trust rebuilt in the *organisational* life space alone will no longer be sufficient to meet organisations' needs for short-run stability. Instead, the attention will turn to what Schein (1978) called the *total life space*.

New Deals for Old – A New Careers Reality ?

While the preceding debate appears to represent a relatively ubiquitous view and, indeed, remains a seductive debate, others are less convinced [Halford & Savage, 1995; Hall *et al*, 1996]. As Guest & McKenzie-Davey (1996:22-3) in particular caution, we should not write off the traditional career: "the traditional organisation, and with it the traditional career, is alive and well."

While the acceptance of a 'new reality' is clearly pervasive and, arguably, has taken on the quality of a universalistic 'truth' in some quarters, there is, thus, by no means unanimous agreement concerning the impact on organisational careers of socio-economic and technological forces. Thus, while the popular management literature abounds with speculation of a new socio-economic world order, and with it new forms of organisational and managerial careers, it is not at all certain that these are (yet) truly revolutionary times [Eccles & Nohria, 1992].

In order to further the debate, therefore, it seems important to reflect on what precisely is being said in this ongoing new deals/old deals debate, and to clarify specifically the drivers which are held to be behind the emergence of this apparent 'new reality'. A number of things are clear. First, it is evident that, in the 1990s in particular, techno-economic and competitive conditions forced organisational restructuring. More specifically, a focus on cost-cutting and improved asset utilisation led to downsizing and flatter managerial hierarchies. In turn, this forced a re-shaping of career opportunity structures, particularly insofar as a reduction in managerial levels and positions is concerned. Additionally, organisational planning horizons shortened and, arguably, this truncated traditional career lifecycles. Further, given that the future needs of organisations now seem more blurry, the notions of managerial succession and long term career planning came into question [Hirsh, Jackson & Jackson, 1995].

In light of these forces, it is perhaps unsurprising that academics and practitioners have proclaimed the end of the centrally managed career, and the emergence of 'career self management', 'employability' and 'marketability' [Hirsh, Jackson & Jackson, 1995; Hall *et al*, 1996; Herriot, Hirsh & Reilly, 1998]. Indeed, research has even suggested that some organisations no longer talk of offering careers in the traditional sense, but rather 'opportunities for development', and have subsequently removed the term career from their recruitment literature [Viney, Adamson & Doherty, 1995, 1997].

However, as will be argued later, theoretical and definitional confusions, perpetuated for at least the last seventy years (as well as philosophical and methodological underdevelopment in the field¹) have masked the 'reality' of what in fact is happening. In short, academics have spent too much time focusing on the question: *what will careers become* ? without first having a robust discussion around the question: *what have careers been* ?² As scholars of metaphor and rhetoric might suggest, instead of proffering radically new perspectives on organisational careers, we have instead been treated to rather blunt bi-polar or dualistic thinking. Thus, where previously we were told of 'jobs for life' we are now told that 'careers are dead'. Where once we thought of careers as being bounded organisationally, we are now told they are 'boundaryless'. And where once we were persuaded of centrally managed careers that represented sequences of work positions, connected by some logical or rationale, we are now told that careers are (variously) lateral, horizontal or spiral, and most definitely protean [Hall, 1996]. In short, if these really are *truly* revolutionary times, some radical perspectives would surely have surfaced by now, but this appears not (yet) to have been the case.

Positioning The Research

This thesis argues resoundingly that the career is *not* dead; it is simply that new structures have created a (temporary) situation in which the rules of the organisational 'career game' appear to have changed [Adamson, Doherty & Viney, 1998].

At a philosophical level, the thesis will argue that, for many individuals, the notion of a 'new' career deal is not yet part of their reality since new ways of talking about careers are not yet embedded in their discursive practices. By extension, since it is not yet part of *their* reality, we can argue that the 'new career reality' is yet to be socially constructed.

¹ See Arthur, Hall & Lawrence (1989).

However, while we may argue that the new deal has yet to emerge fully, its impending reality still creates consequences, and these are also a concern in this thesis. When the assumptions of the career deal go unchallenged for years at a time, it is possible to argue that individuals experience no great ontological crisis - the potential challenge to their self efficacy and career self identity is mediated by the illusion of organisational stability and vocational certainty. However, when the rules change, and new deals rhetoric becomes more prevalent - (and embedded organisationally in the form of a genuinely 'new' organisational discourse) - careers have to be reconstructed in ways which allow individuals to again make sense of the world and their place within it.

The Research Context

The impetus for this research has been threefold: (i) to study a population which has historically been recruited in order to play out traditional, bureaucratic organisational careers - namely graduates - in an age range which the literature³ tells us should be interesting; (ii) to study this population in organisational contexts in which the rules of the career game are being re-written; and (iii) to do this at a time when societal values are changing, organisational imperatives are changing, and thus the (subjective) meanings of careers are, literally, being reconstructed.

Specifically, the thesis is concerned with the extent to which research subjects' career stories incorporate new ways of talking about careers: that is, the degree to which subjects provide evidence of having appropriated a new vocabulary and are, perhaps, demonstrating new ways of presenting themselves to others. Given this positioning, the thesis is thus able to speak directly to the issue of the extent to which the 'old' career deal is dead, and a 'new' deal is emerging.

The primary research has taken place in two organisations, namely the Bank of England, and IBM (UK) Limited. While, on the surface, these two organisations may appear to be entirely different there are, in fact, many important similarities which provide an interesting basis for a degree of comparative analysis. Both organisations have, historically, offered something very close to the archetypal 'job for life', supported by deep managerial structures, and thus opportunities for regular progression *up* the career ladder. Second, at the time of the research, both

² See Collin (1995a, 1996).

³ Namely the Life Span Development Psychology and career phase/career stage literatures, especially Levinson *et al* (1978) cf. the *age thirty transition* (age 28-33).

organisations were experiencing dramatic changes in strategy and structure. In the case of IBM, the largest corporate loss in its history in the early 1990s forced a fundamental review of strategy and subsequent organisational realignment. In the case of the Bank, evolving changes in its terms of reference in light of the move toward economic and monetary union, as well as a review of core activities in light of competition from other European central banks, set in motion a dramatic reorganisation. Additionally, both organisations have historically adopted a 'grow from within' human resources policy, recognising that graduates represent a pool of talent from which - (albeit to differing degrees) - the senior management cadre of the future might be drawn. These assumptions, however, were beginning to change in both organisations at the time of the research.

The Research Subjects: why graduates ?

There are a number of reasons for choosing graduates as the subjects of the research. First, the field of graduate career management is a recognised subsidiary field in the wider field of career theory and development (Herriot, 1984, 1992a,b; Mabey, 1986; Arnold & Nicholson, 1991; Arnold & Davey, 1992a,b; Herriot *et al*, 1993), and thus provides a useful domain in which to make an incremental contribution to knowledge. Second, the literature suggests that graduates have historically entered employment with high expectations of developing hierarchical organisational careers and thus, we can argue, have historically played the career game by the 'old' rules. However, the literature also tells us that graduates typically have unmet expectations or dashed hopes [Arnold & Davey, 1992a,b; Herriot *et al*, 1993]. They thus provide an interesting population to study in the context of the changing psychological contract. Specifically, given that graduates have traditionally embarked upon organisational careers in the context of old deal assumptions about how such careers are constructed, it becomes important to understand how they are interpreting (and responding to) the emerging rhetoric of a 'new' deal.

Hypothesising the Emergence of a New Rhetoric

A developing, working hypothesis underpins the research, namely that we can theorise a process by which the old careers discourse is succeeded by a new careers rhetoric (see appendix 1). (Note - it is argued that it is not yet possible to speak of a 'new discourse' since it has yet to fully emerge and be embedded organisationally).

The key points are as follows:

1. universalistic statements concerning careers and job security emerge in the wake of the downsizing and restructuring of the early 1990s
2. there then emerges an academic discourse around these statements which, in turn, produces a normative rhetoric on the nature of (all) careers in the new world order
3. there are various organisational/managerial responses to this rhetoric, mainly by the HR community - for example, the removal of centralised career management structures, and the introduction of tools to support career self management
4. line managers start to use the 'new' vocabulary 'given' to them by HR and others and, to varying extents, extol the virtues of the protean career
5. individual employees, in turn, start to notice these symbolic changes, and begin to engage in the emerging rhetoric
6. individuals begin reconstructing their expectations and understandings of their potential career trajectories and their relationship with employers, but this is difficult in the absence of any concrete reference points or benchmarks
7. different responses thus emerge within different groups of individuals. Some 'shrug it off' as their sense of self identity is not highly connected/dependent on their formal or psychological contract. Others experience a transitory sense of 'trauma' as they try to understand the new rhetoric and its implications for them. Still others suffer a more fundamental ontological crisis
8. over time, however, new and varied career models emerge within organisations; this inter-organisational variety being apparent because 'new' career deals are still context-specific in both a historical and contemporary sense

The data discussed in later chapters makes a contribution to our understanding of this story from stages 5-8; earlier stages having been addressed in the existing literature. In particular, later chapters seek to expose those points at which individuals continue to anchor their stories (and identities) in the discourse of the old deal, and those points at which they are 'struggling' to accommodate elements of the new rhetoric. In both cases, it is argued that organisational context is a strong force which, to some extent, dictates what of the old can be given up and what of the new may be embraced.

Research Outputs

This research has been designed to be exploratory, and thus for the purposes of theory building. It points the way to a reconceptualisation of the notion of career which, on the one hand, recognises and embraces the value of traditional, social-psychological perspectives and, on the other, advocates the accommodation of 'new' discursive perspectives. It also demonstrates, from a methodological perspective, the value of constructionist, contextualist-interpretivist approaches.

More specifically, the thesis presented here contributes to two key areas: i) our understanding of the extent to which the 'new deal/new reality' is a universalistic phenomenon as presented in the practitioner/early academic literature; and ii) our understanding of the process individuals engage in as they attempt to reconstruct their concept of career, and in so doing their self identity. The thesis makes its contributions by exploring data collected at a particular historical point in the new deal storyline (summer 1996). In so doing it contributes to i) by examining the specific nature of the deal in two organisations. It contributes to ii) by illuminating the process of reconstructing careers.

Chapter Synopsis

This chapter has sought to provide an overview of the social and techno-economic forces which, it is argued, created the conditions in which the emergence of a 'new deal' in organisational careers was possible. It has then outlined the positioning of this research, and considered briefly organisational context of and the subjects involved in the research process. It then outlined a working hypothesis concerning the way in which old deals discourse comes to be replaced by the rhetoric of the new. This process is outlined here in order that, in later chapters, we can comment on those points at which individuals continue to anchor their stories (and identities) in the discourse of the old deal, and those points at which they might appear to be 'struggling' to accommodate elements of the new rhetoric, and thus come to terms with emerging new realities.

The chapter ended by asserting that this research has been conceived as exploratory research and, as such, its purpose is simply to gain a better, contextually-specific understanding of the emergence of the 'new deal', and individuals' responses to it, at a particular historical point in the new deal storyline, before then illuminating the process(es) by which careers and identities are, we can argue, reconstructed

The next chapter provides a review of the career theory literature, from its origins in the work history studies of the Chicago School, principally from the 1930s onward; through the rich period of the 1970s where the field attracted the interest of psychologists and social-psychologists; through to the development, in the 1980s and early 1990s, of a multi-disciplinary perspective. The chapter also considers the importance of career, both to organisations and individuals and, briefly, points to its historical and contemporary meanings. However, the key sections of the chapter are those which deal with the apparent emergence of a 'new deal' in organisational careers

in the early-mid 1990s, and the central importance of Herriot & Pemberton's (1995) book *New Deals in Employment: A revolution in managerial careers*, as well as the 'New Deal in Employment' conference at the UK's City University later that year. The chapter goes on to consider other key writings in the field (both UK and U.S) which developed the theme of an emerging new reality, and pointed the way to a new way of managing careers in the 21st Century. The chapter ends with a critique both of the field generally, but more specifically the 'new deals' rhetoric of the mid-1990s, and thus also points up areas for theoretical development going forward.

Chapter 3 concerns philosophy, methodology and method, and begins with a review of those fields which influenced my thinking in the early stages of this research, and subsequently led to an interest in Social Constructionism and Discourse Analysis. Thus, learnings from my reading of Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology and Hermeneutics serve to provide some of the background positions and assumptions which have been enduring in this research and, in due course, have led to an appreciation for the importance of language in the social phenomena we study. The chapter goes on to consider Social Constructionism and Discourse Analysis, not in order to provide the reader with an exhaustive review of these fields, but rather to explain the key tenets of these perspectives, and how they have influenced the development of the thesis, from both a theoretical and methodological perspective.

The chapter then goes on to outline the methodological approach I have taken, and explains my positioning as a contextualist-interpretivist researcher. It also considers, importantly, what discourse analysis is and what discourse analysts do. Issues of objectivity/subjectivity, representativeness, generalisability and replicability are, of course, considered, as is a framework for determining how to 'do' discourse analysis (or more specifically, use discourse analytic techniques to develop a richer reading of the data). Finally, the chapter considers the design of the research, and focuses on the way in which both the pilot and the main fieldwork were carried out.

Given the contextualist-interpretivist positioning of this research, Chapter 4 then looks in some detail at the key contextual features of the two case study organisations and, thus, considers the antecedents to the emergence of apparent new realities. This, therefore, sets the context for a detailed reporting of the data in later chapters. The chapter thus provides some background to the case studies of the Bank of England and IBM (UK) Limited and, in each case, offers an overview of the organisation and its business; the graduate career management context; and organisational change. Finally, the purpose and organisation of the case study chapters is outlined.

Chapters 5 & 6 therefore consider, respectively, data generated in the Bank of England and IBM (UK) Limited. Each of these chapters is designed as a reporting of extracts of the data from the main fieldwork. Throughout the chapters, passages of subjects' actual talk are presented, and commentary offered as to their meaning and possible interpretation. It is important to note, however, that the wider analysis and discussion of key themes (including comparative analysis of the case studies, and the identification and discussion of the rhetorics and discourses evident in subjects' talk) is presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7, therefore, brings together the key themes emerging from the case studies, and identifies the key similarities and differences between the data presented for the two case study organisations, paying particular attention to differences in discursive context. The chapter begins with a brief review of the key theoretical issues outlined in earlier chapters in order to set an appropriate context for this wider analysis and discussion. It goes on to reiterate the importance of context, and synthesises the key contextual features of the two organisations.

At the heart of the chapter is an analysis of the case studies. The analytical approach taken brings to light the key themes emerging from the case studies, and identifies the key themes, rhetorics and discourses which seem to characterise subjects' talk. Thus, distinctions are made between vocabularies/discursive repertoires which are of an emergent quality, and thus not fully embedded organisationally (rhetorics) versus vocabularies or repertoires which have a more enduring or resilient, as well as more integrative, nature (discourses). Distinctions are also made between those rhetorics or discourses which seem to be largely independent of organisational context, and thus more embedded at a societal level, and those rhetorics or discourses which seem either to be context-specific or, more accurately in most cases, have a particular resonance in their manifestations in one or either organisation. This positioning of the analysis is important in order both to show what is meant by 'doing discourse analysis', and to situate the thesis clearly in the wider contextually contingent debates.

The chapter goes on to consider the implications of the analysis and revisits some of the key issues and questions outlined earlier in the thesis, namely around the performative and constructive qualities of talk, subject positions and power relations, and the 'competition' between discourses which creates ontological 'struggle' at the individual level.

Drawing on Chapters 1 & 2, we then review the nature of organisational change and the emergence of new deals; summarise the predicates of the new deal; and, for the

purposes of clarity, re-visit our definition of 'old' and 'new'. This leads to a reconsideration of the title of this thesis and the fundamental assertions therein. We then look briefly at the implications and relevance of these answers for practitioners operating in the career development field.

The final section of Chapter 7 first outlines my key reflections on the research process, the limitations of the research design and methodology, and the knowledge claims or contributions the thesis is seeking to make. Finally, under the banner of 'new directions', a few comments are made about the way in which the field of career theory might develop from the perspective offered here, and three specific areas for further research are outlined.

CHAPTER 2

THE CAREER THEORY LITERATURE

The Derivation and Meanings of Career

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘career’ as being about an individual’s progression or advancement through life, often in the context of a specific profession or institution. However, at its root, the term means road or course, from the French *carriere*, and wagon or carriage, from the Latin *carus*. As Hughes (1937) suggested, it is not, therefore, a concept which by any means is limited only to commercial, professional or military institutional forms of the last two millennia.

In contemporary usage, ‘career’ is often used synonymously with the term ‘work’, and so when referring to a career we have come to mean what one does for a living, who one works for, or the details of one’s CV. However, ‘work’ and ‘career’ imply very different concepts.

Fundamentally, the term ‘career’ has evolved into a powerful metaphor for a journey which has direction and purpose. In other words, one’s progression through life or through a profession has come to imply forward movement toward a destination, or advancement toward completion. While, in some contexts, this may simply mean reaching the highest level possible in an institution or profession, we cannot ignore associations with broader philosophical or theological concerns. Thus, for some, the metaphor may literally imply progression in the direction of becoming ‘God-like’.

For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, the ‘career’ has also implied betterment or improvement, both from the perspective of personal learning or spiritual growth, and more commonly in terms of financial gain or socio-economic status. Thus, while priests may regard their career as a vocation or calling, and doctors or lawyers might prize their status as belonging to a profession, for many the career is simply about the occupation of an office or status in return for which there are incremental improvements in socio-economic worth over time. Work, by contrast, is less about the long term development of human capital, and more about the simple exchange of labour for short term financial gain.

The Importance of Career to Individuals

The notion of career therefore means different things to different people. At its simplest, the career provides a framework for the (potential) satisfaction of basic economic needs over the lifetime. It is also a means of providing individuals with a sense of social status and worth. From a developmental perspective, the career also provides a context within which to exercise one's *life dream* (Levinson *et al* 1978), and since it might be regarded as the central modern *life space* (Super, 1980) it provides structure, purpose and meaning to one's life. It thus also has huge practical and symbolic implications for contemporary conceptions of self. As Young and Valach (1992:362) comment: "[Career] is not primarily a theoretical construct... [it] does not have a precise meaning; rather... it is used in meaningful ways, it is given meaning, and it creates meaning". Or, as Hirsch, Jackson & Jackson (1995:14) comment: "For individuals the 'career' is a way of thinking about their past and their future. In industrial societies, where work and career largely define identity, it expresses who they are [and] it has given some people... a sense – maybe misplaced – of security and control."

The 'Usefulness' of Career to Organisations

The concept of career has a particular value to organisations. In short, it supports the corporate planning process through the effective deployment of human resources, and provides a means with which to control, plan and direct management and organisational development. The notion of career therefore provides a mechanism for management succession planning, as well as supporting the retention of high potential individuals. It is also, of course, a potent framework within which to create the conditions for loyalty and tenure, and therefore to negotiate psychological contracts.

Thus, the concept of career provides organisations with a rationale for how they will fill jobs in the short term; develop people, and thus move them through the managerial layers in the mid-term; and provide a vehicle for meeting the organisation's needs to fill key, senior positions in the future [Herriot, 1992]. By encouraging the internal development of people, it also serves to develop a strong organisational culture, increase individuals' flexibility, and reduce redundancy or the cost of recruitment and training [Hirsh, Jackson & Jackson, 1995].

Commonplace Academic Definitions

In both the careers and management literatures, ‘the career’ is typically defined as “the sequence of work-related positions occupied throughout a person’s life” (London & Stumpf, 1982:4) or “the evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time” [Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989:8]. However, according to Collin (1998:413) Hughes’ (1937) ‘objective career’ – the externally judged sequence of positions – “is the most widely accepted scientific use of the term in the literature”.

It is important though to challenge the value of some of these commonplace definitions in order to appreciate the full richness of the concept. Thus, it is crucial to differentiate between the work history and the career, as between the work career and the life career. (This is discussed in more detail later).

Demarcating the Careers Literature

The careers literature is extensive, not least since the concept of career has always attracted a multidisciplinary following. Indeed, as Collin (*ibid*) suggests: “Career arises from the interaction of individuals with organisations and society. It is, therefore, the legitimate concern of several disciplines and sub-disciplines such as organisational psychology, counselling psychology, sociology, labour economics, organisation and management studies”.

However, as Collin (*ibid*) also suggests, there are perhaps two main fields dedicated to the study and practice of career. The first is concerned with career choice, education and counselling (e.g. Osipow, 1983; Watts *et al*, 1981), while the second is concerned more with organisational careers, and has its origins in organisational psychology and sociology [e.g. Hall, 1976; Schein, 1978; Van Maanen, 1977].

This thesis is interested primarily in the literature in the second area since its concern is with the organisational career.

Classical Definitions from the Core Disciplines

As illustrated earlier, there are many potential interpretations of career. Thus, for example, from an economic perspective, Becker (1975) construed career as the vehicle through which human capital is accrued over a lifetime of education and experience. And from a political science perspective, Kaufman (1960) sees the career as the sequence of endeavours to maximise self-interest through successive attempts

to gain power, status or influence. However, to unravel the essence of academics' enduring concerns with the organisational career concept since the early twentieth century, we must turn in the main to sociology and psychology.

Sociology views the career concept essentially from one of two perspectives. First, exemplified by the Chicago School from c.1918⁴-1950, the career is conceived as the unfolding of social roles, in a specified environment over time. Thus, the Chicago sociologists (e.g. Cressey, 1932; Hughes, 1937; Hall, 1948; Becker, 1953) were interested in the life histories of the local community, and their espoused goal was to understand how people construed their lives. Blending social ecology, demography, urbanisation and social deviance, they viewed the career as an heuristic concept, one with a wide range of potential applications [Barley, 1989]. As Hughes (1937: 413) comments:

“A career consists, objectively, of a series of statuses or clearly defined offices... subjectively, [it] is the moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole, and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions, and the things that happen to him... the career is [therefore] by no means exhausted in a series of business and professional achievements. There are other points at which one's life touches the social order.”

It follows that sociologists have long viewed careers as examples of social role behaviour – 'career as the unfolding of social roles'; as being characterised by status passages; as being defined by the notions of subjective and objective; and as the 'properties' of actors and institutions in social systems – [Glaser 1968; Glaser & Strauss, 1971; Hughes, 1958; Mills, 1959]. However, of particular importance is the work of Shaw (1931). In *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career*, Shaw argues that the unfolding of an individual's life is bound to the contingencies of his (*sic*) social situation; that the pattern of the delinquent's life is determined by a series of relationships with significant others; and that the career develops in a series of stages. Thus, Shaw identified three fundamentally important components of the career: the situational, relational and chronological.

The second major perspective of sociology is exemplified by Warner & Abegglen, (1955); Blau & Duncan, (1967); and Featherman & Hauser, (1978). From this standpoint, the career is seen in terms of social mobility, and thus the key interest is the series of positions held over time (represented by a person's title) which are seen as indicators of social status.

⁴ Beginning with Thomas & Znaniecki's (1918) interest in life histories.

From the perspective of psychology, there are three dominant strands to the literature. First, from a perspective which accepts traditional views on the stability of personality in adulthood, there has long been an interest in personality-occupation matching [Super, 1957; Argyris, 1964; Schein, 1978; Holland, 1973, 1985]. In particular, this tradition is concerned with the matching of needs for the mutual benefit of individuals and organisations.

Second, developmental psychologists (e.g. Levinson *et al*, 1978; Levinson, 1984) view the career as a component of the life structure. They thus view eras and transitions throughout the career as predictable, and argue they should be accommodated by career choices [see Crites, 1976]. From this perspective, the career is seen as the central *life space* [Super, 1980].

Third, from a humanistic perspective, theorists emphasise the opportunities a career can provide for individual growth, and how that growth in turn can benefit organisations and society [e.g. Sheppard, 1984].

Finally, from a social psychological perspective, the career is conceived as a series of mediated responses to external role messages⁵. Thus, subsidiary interests from this perspective include psychological maturation, socialisation, and the influence of significant others [e.g. Schneider & Hall, 1972; Bailyn, 1980].

Unifying Themes

It can thus be seen that a number of key themes characterised and united the career theory literature for much of the 20th Century⁶:

- the individual, and the importance of self concept and self esteem
- the organisation as social institution
- the differing needs of individual and organisation
- person-organisation interaction
- the influence of environment, and the impress of culture and social values
- the perspective of time

⁵ This is also, in spirit, therefore, the heritage of the position I am adopting here in this thesis.

⁶ See Adamson, Doherty & Viney (1998).

Shifts of Emphasis from the mid-1970s

For the most part, prior to the mid-1970s, psychologists and sociologists were thus addressing the notion of career from traditional disciplinary perspectives. However, in the late seventies, there began a period of concerted effort toward the development of career theory as a discipline in its own right, with the emergence of 'the career management perspective' and of practitioner-oriented inquiry [Hall, 1976; Van Maanen, 1977; Kotter, Faux & McArthur, 1978; Schein, 1978].

During the eighties, the focus was on organisational practices and human resource systems [Brown & Brooks, 1984; Sonnenfeld, 1984; Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988; Dalton & Thompson, 1986; Gutteridge, 1986], as well as on a re-consideration of individual-organisation interaction, negotiation and contracting [Joyce *et al*, 1982; Rousseau, 1989].

Since the mid-eighties, career writers have expanded their interests far beyond the traditional perspectives of psychology and sociology, and have adopted a multi-disciplinary orientation. Thus, the major contributions to career theory in the last fifteen years or so have sought to reflect the dynamic relationships between individuals, organisations and society [Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989]. Career theorists thus began to pay more attention to the careers of women [Astin, 1984a,b; Bardwick, 1980; Gallos, 1989; Gilligan, 1980, 1982]; to work-family conflicts, [Amatea, 1986; Higgins & Duxbury, 1992; Higgins, Duxbury & Irving, 1992; Kinnier *et al*, 1991]; and to the unique challenges faced by the dual career couple [Bailyn, 1984; Burke & McKeen, 1993].

Attention also focused on the management of career transitions, [Howard & Bray, 1988; Nicholson, 1984; Nicholson & West, 1988]; and the consequences of organisational re-structuring and alienation, and the seemingly paradoxical notions of career commitment and organisational loyalty [Blau, 1988; Colarelliu & Bishop, 1990; Morrow & McElroy, 1987].

Additionally, given increasing change and uncertainty in the business environment since the early eighties, researchers began to question the continued relevance of the career concept itself and, in particular, the appropriateness of bureaucratic notions of the work career [Kanter, 1989].

The Turn to The 'new deal'

This concern with the continued relevance of the (bureaucratic) career perpetuated for much of the late eighties and into the early nineties, coincident with the onset of worldwide recession. However, between April and September 1994, three commonly cited articles were published which, arguably, mark the genesis of a *new* debate in the field.

In *A Manager's Career in the New Economy* (*Fortune* magazine 4th April 1994) Kiechel argued that the changing landscape of the U.S. economy and, in particular, the increasing importance of information technology, would create significant turbulence for those still expecting a thirty year career, those without high school diplomas, and all those over age forty ! Building on the work of Michael Driver and William Bridges⁷, he posits the end of the old industrial model, and with it the end of the traditional, bureaucratic career. To cope with this revolution, Kiechel argues managers must embrace multi-focused thinking, multi-tasking, and a preference for short term, task-based assignments. (He also goes on to argue for specialisation, self-marketing, and self-knowledge as the means by which to ensure one's employability amidst this turbulence and uncertainty).

In their article, *Toward a Career Resilient Workforce* (Harvard Business Review, July-August 1994), Waterman, Waterman & Collard echo this sentiment, and mourn the passing of "the longtime covenant between employee and employer." They go on to comment (*Op. cit.* p.87): "We remember fondly the days when IBM could offer lifetime employment. And even if we didn't work for the likes of IBM, most of us understood that respectable companies would offer at least a measure of job security in exchange for adequate performance and some exhibition of loyalty. No longer." They also echo Kiechel's thoughts about employability, concluding that to be career resilient one needs to a) focus on the marketability of one's skills, and b) engage in mutually beneficial 'contracts' with a variety of employers.

In *The End of the Job* (*Fortune* magazine, 19th September 1994), William Bridges attempts to go one step further, arguing that even the traditional *job* is near its end, given downsizing, automation, and self-managed teams. Bridges argues that the traditional job – regular hours, strictly prescribed duties, and unvarying pay - is no longer socially or economically adaptive, and thus workers must learn to be much

⁷ Kiechel does not cite specific references but, in the one case, he may be referring to an earlier draft of Bridges (1994).

more flexible. This is, of course, probably true, but Bridges then also proclaims the end of the manager in light of this demise of the job – perhaps a step too far.

While, intuitively, the spirit of these articles seems to ring true, there is also, at best, a polemic feel to them and, at worst, an almost apocalyptic pessimism about the continued value of the career concept. Perhaps more fundamentally, the authors do not attempt to theorise or challenge fundamentally the concepts of career and job. As a result, the bulk of each article is mere prescription. However, as will be illustrated later, these authors were not alone in their failure to challenge fundamental assumptions embedded in contemporary conceptions of career.

New Deals: a revolution in managerial careers ?

Perhaps the most influential contribution to this 'new' debate - (in the UK at least) - came with the publication of Herriot & Pemberton's (1995) *New Deals: A Revolution in Managerial Careers*. In their book, the authors argue we are witnessing a revolution in the nature of psychological contracts between managers/professionals and their organisations. They argue that the 'old' (relational) deal between employer and employee has 'gone forever', to be replaced by a 'new' (transactional) deal.

As tables 1 and 2 below illustrate, under the terms of the 'old deal' the individual offered loyalty in return for security of employment; conformity and commitment in return for training & development and career prospects; and trust in return for 'care in times of trouble'. Under the terms of the 'new deal' much of this (Herriot & Pemberton argue - 1995:17-20) disappeared, and thus employers no longer offered security, prospects or care but, more simply (and perhaps more starkly) financial and non-financial rewards for performance and, at the end of the day, a job. The employee, on the other hand, was behoven to work long hours, assume additional responsibilities, develop a broader range of skills, and be tolerant of continuous change and ambiguity.

These are the key elements of the much talked about 'new' and 'old' deal(s), the key feature of which is, thus, the shift from a relational to a more transactional contract between employer and employee.

Table 1. What the individual and the organisation offered each other in the past (the old deal – 1985).

| You offered | Organisation offered |
|--|--------------------------|
| Loyalty – not leaving | Security of employment |
| Conformity – doing what you were asked | Promotion prospects |
| Commitment – going the extra mile | Training and development |
| Trust – they’ll keep their promises | Care in times of trouble |

Table 2. What the individual and the organisation offer each other now (the new deal – 1995). [see

| You offer | Organisation offers |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Long hours | High pay |
| Added responsibility | Rewards for performance |
| Broader skills | A job |
| Tolerance of change and ambiguity | |

The revolution which Herriot & Pemberton claim is the result of socio-economic change in the 1980s and early 1990s, driven largely (as we saw in Chapter 1) by organisation restructuring (downsizing, redundancies), in itself a response to economic downturn and more intense market competitiveness⁸.

Under the terms of the old deal, Herriot & Pemberton argue that both sides trusted each other to keep their part of the bargain. So, for example, organisations invested heavily in general management training and development and, in return, employees gave loyalty in lieu of future promotion. The old deal thus often represented “a real relationship, which cemented over time [and was] characterised by trust, loyalty and commitment... it’s going the extra mile, on both sides, that really captures the nature of the old deal.” [Op. cit. 18]. By contrast, they argue (p.20) that “the new deal isn’t *relational* anymore. There’s no taking on trust, no mutual commitment. The new deal is a strictly *transactional* one; you give me this and I’ll give you that... there are no extra miles being gone here, no loyalty and affection”.

⁸ It is interesting to note, however, Herriot & Pemberton’s claim that downsizing and delayering are not part of an integrated plan to achieve business goals, rather a largely piecemeal and reactive solution, clouded by an increase in “Orwellian double-speak” in the 1980s (Op. cit. 9-12)

Herriot & Pemberton go on to develop the argument that this apparent absence now of loyalty and commitment is the result of a breakdown in trust and fairness⁹. As a result, the major ‘gripe’ about the new deal is that managers feel they have been “...forced into the new deal by their lack of labour market power in a period of recession.” [*Op. cit.* 25]¹⁰. As a result, the dominant emotions have been anger and powerlessness, leading to a feeling of reluctance to participate in the new deal¹¹.

In the remainder of their book, Herriot & Pemberton examine the HRM systems that have been put in place (or not as the case may be) to cater for this new deal, before turning to a prescription for individual and organisation survival. They soften their argument somewhat, from the rather bi-polar ‘old deal out: new deal in’ position and, instead, argue that we are seeing the emergence of a *range* of different types of deals being negotiated, according to the individual’s and the organisation’s wants and offers. They also, therefore, suggest that the revolution is not yet completed and, thus, we are in a period of transition. However, their conclusion is clear (*Op. cit.* 58):

“We are left with the conclusion that the increased productivity evidenced during the last decade is the result of fewer people working longer hours, in order to earn their right to continued employment. From the perspective of the captains of industry, this may not matter too much. What they are grateful for is that their organisations have survived both the competitive bloodbath and one of the two worst recessions of the century. They believe they have done so by cutting costs and persuading the markets that they are more efficient. What they may not realise is that in so doing they have set in motion a revolution in the nature of the employment relationship the like of which they never imagined. For they have shattered the old psychological contract and failed to negotiate the new one.”

The 'New Deal in Employment' Conference

Influenced largely by the rhetorical persuasiveness of Herriot & Pemberton’s *New Deals*, the 'New Deal in Employment' conference was held at the UK’s City University Business School in December 1995. The conference brought together a wide range of academics, consultants and practitioners to debate the nature of this apparent ‘new deal’. As the conference marketing materials outlined: “The purpose of the conference [was] to establish what is happening across a range of sectors [and] to begin to outline what the ‘new deal’ might look like.”

The keynote speech was given by Peter Herriot. In his paper, *New Dealing* - which concerns the processes by which ‘psychological contracts’ are negotiated - Herriot

⁹ See also Herriot, Hirsh & Reilly (1998); Rousseau (1990); and Sims (1994).

¹⁰ See also Barney & Lawrence (1989).

¹¹ See also Scase & Goffee (1989).

aligns his definition of psychological contracts with Argyris (1960) and Schein (1978). That is, he argues that psychological contracting is a social process in which employer and employee are parties to 'the deal'. He argues that his 'social contracting' model¹² is particularly relevant to today's organisational context, given organisational restructuring in the wake of economic downturn. Specifically, he points to the impact of economic downturn on innovation, and goes on to argue (following West & Farr, 1990) that, in an innovation-averse climate, individuals feel less secure, and thus less inclined to take risks. Consequently, they suffer a loss of agency, and therefore feel disconnected from the organisations within which, and for whom, they work. He is thus proposing that psychological contracting (*dealing*) is a methodology for regaining a sense of agency since, where traditionally the old career deal has been imposed, the 'new deal' must involve negotiation and compromise¹³.

In their conference paper *Facilitating the New Deal*, Pemberton & Herriot examine further the difference between the old and new deals, this time as a result of a series of focus groups in six business units of a well established financial services organisation. In this paper, the authors consider individuals' perceptions of 'the deal' as it was in 1975; their views of the deal at the time of the research (1995); and their thoughts on the deal as it might be in 2000 and beyond. Three groups were consulted, including graduates, and middle management¹⁴.

With regard to the graduate deal, the authors conclude (p.5) that "these graduates distinguished themselves from their predecessors in the emphasis they placed on their business focus, and on their unwillingness to 'serve time'. They see themselves as comfortable with time-based career contracts, provided that the organisation provides the opportunities and support that will enable them to exit the contract with enhanced market value." With regard to the middle management deal they conclude (p.6) that "the strength of feeling with which middle managers spoke of the present deal exhibits the discomfort of adjusting from a relational to a transactional contract. As much as they can recognise the potential of new organisational offerings, their stronger sense is of withdrawal of offers which to them have high value."

Thus, as Pemberton & Herriot suggest (p.4): "In all their comments, it was clear that regardless of the literal truth of their descriptions of a past many were not part of, their assessment of the past was based on a benchmark of how they saw the present.

¹² See also Rousseau & Parks (1993).

¹³ It is worth noting that Herriot defines the career as a series of such deals.

¹⁴ The third group was clerical staff.

Their descriptions were as much about what they no longer saw to be visible, as what they believed to have once been".

Despite the fact that the Pemberton & Herriot research was conducted in only one organisation, and was based on post-hoc rationalisation of a time before which nearly two thirds of research subjects were even born, there is a commonsensical attractiveness to the data they present. However, as Sparrow (in his conference paper *The Changing Nature of Psychological Contracts in the UK Banking Sector: does it matter ?*) suggests; "We need to know what type of change is actually taking place in the mechanisms that underpin the psychological contract" (*Op. cit.* 11). As he argues (p.12), the reality of the 'new deal' is, in fact, "a collection of individualised attitudinal stances" ranging from rejection of the terms of the new deal to active negotiation. This, he suggests, will require ever more sophisticated HRM solutions in order to cater for such "increasingly fragmented employee expectations" [*ibid*].

In their conference paper *Performance Management and the Psychological Contract*, Stiles *et al* suggest the solution may lie in the ways in which performance management systems are used to support a shift away from the traditional contract of job security and pre-determined career paths. They argue that a person's experience of an organisation is shaped by the HRM processes which drive recruitment, training, appraisal and reward and, thus "performance management processes play a key role in creating a framework within which the psychological contract between employer and employee is determined" [*Op. cit.* 2]. As a result, they argue that changing the performance management system provides an important means by which to "clarify the changing employment relationship" [*Op. cit.* 3].

However, as Viney, Adamson & Doherty argue – in their conference paper *Organisations' Expectations and Career Management of Fast Track Recruits* – it is not at all clear that such an approach is either widespread or universally supported for all employee sub-groups. Based on case study research in twenty private sector organisations they argue that, for graduates, there is convincing evidence of a paradox¹⁵. That is, while many organisations were in the process of reviewing their career philosophies, they had little or no intention of changing the nature of the long term, relational contract for fast trackers and high fliers. In short, the commercial imperative to provide a cadre of potential future senior managers meant that organisations continued to expect graduates to spend a significant part of their career

¹⁵ See also Viney, Adamson & Doherty (1997).

with them, and rewarded them as such (e.g. through incremental investment in training and development).

Outwith the New Deals Conference: What else was happening ?

The 'New Deal in Employment' conference illustrates well that, at this time, academics and practitioners were struggling to some extent both to define the essence of the new deal and, more specifically, to determine how to respond to it. As an examination of other papers published around this time illustrates, while there was a high degree of consensus on the nature of the 'revolutionary' changes taking place, there was little consensus in terms of how to redefine the notion of career.

The Institute for Employment Studies (IES).

The IES report #287 (Hirsh, Jackson & Jackson, 1995) – *Careers in Organisations: Issues for the future* – represents the output of eleven career development forums held by the IES with members of its Co-operative Research Programme. It maps out the main career development issues concerning those organisations and seeks to identify trends in policy and practice. The report centres on three themes: the problematic nature of the term 'career'; how to manage careers in the absence of clear career paths; and the respective roles of the organisation, HR function, and the individual in managing careers 'effectively'.

The report opens by defining career as a sequence of work assignments, and applies this to a variety of different types of worker/professional. Hence, "[C]areers are – and always have been – varied in nature. They have contained lateral moves and moves between employers, as well as upward moves. For many – especially women – they have also contained periods of unpaid work or of part-time employment" [*Op. cit.* 12]. However, as the report argues, the idea of an organisational career appears to be "in a state of flux" [*ibid*].

The report continues with the usual treatise on the antecedents of the 'new' deal, and then goes on (echoing Herriot) to explore psychological contracting as a means by which to develop a new model of careers. The authors also consider changes in organisational career management practices, and point to the emerging, and much-heralded, philosophy of career self management. They go on to consider role descriptions, succession planning, job advertising, assessment, and so on. In other words, there is little new in this report, though it is a useful summary of contemporary career development interventions and attempts to adapt *existing* career management

systems to the emerging ‘reality’ of the new deal. Under the heading *Developing a Strategy for Careers*, they conclude:

“...at the present time, both organisations and individuals are in real difficulty when it comes to thinking about careers. They are confused about what a career involves and... both parties are having to rethink how the whole concept of career will work in the future. From an organisation’s point of view this means recognising that old style ‘cradle to grave’ careers are a thing of the past and that a strategy for managing and developing careers that has been taken for granted by employees and employers, will no longer work” [*Op. cit.* 41].

The IES report #305 (Hirsh & Jackson, 1996) – *Strategies for Career Development: Promise, practice and pretence* – is symbolic in the field of a moderate step forward in practice and thinking between 1995-1996, and considers the pressures¹⁶ driving some employers to regain responsibility for career development. The authors suggest there is no single answer, rather a continuum of responses to the key issues of security, development, and promotion prospects, brought about by the ‘end of the career’. This is illustrated in table 3 below (adapted from IES report #305 p.3).

Table 3. A Continuum of Career Development Responses.

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Employment offer</i> | Organisational career | Development track | Negotiated over time | Role contribution | Job for now |
| <i>Development offer</i> | Integrated with career | Planned development | Development partnership | Supported self development | Unsupported except for job training |
| <i>Responsibility for development</i> | Organisation | ⇐ | Partnership | ⇒ | Individual |

The report goes on to question whether the career has indeed been ‘killed off’ and, instead, posits that different subgroups within the workforce have access to different ‘deals’. Thus: “Senior managers and ‘high potential staff’ are receiving renewed attention and are still expected to have a ‘career’ with the organisation, even if not a career for life. Succession planning is being strengthened, and the development of this group is usually planned” [*ibid*]¹⁷.

¹⁶ For example, the need for a flexible workforce; fear of demotivating or losing staff; and concerns over managerial succession planning.

¹⁷ This would seem to support research by Viney, Adamson & Doherty (1995, 1997).

The report also makes an attempt – (as conspicuous as it is uncommon in the literature at this time) – to unravel the changing career message and its business context [*Op. cit.* 19] in order to paint “a more realistic view of the changing fundamental assumptions about ‘career’ which have been going on underneath the process changes” [*ibid*]. This ‘realistic’ picture is painted by reference to the well documented antecedents of the new deal, and thus it is demonstrated why organisations began to claim the end of the career deal (or, more accurately, the end of security and guaranteed promotion). The problem, of course, is that a solution to the challenges of the new deal remains, as illustrated on page 21 of the report:

“The problem with saying that the organisation cannot offer careers any more is that it does not add up to a new career development strategy – especially when some people manifestly do still get promoted. Senior managers, knowing this full well, look around for something better to say. So what do they say next ? Many have tried to make a positive strategy out of converting the statement – *we can’t promise you a career* – into the statement – *our employees are responsible for their own careers*. This sounds rather as though your career is a valuable gift being handed back to you by a generous organisation. What the organisation is really saying is *all this career stuff is far too difficult for us, so we’re giving it back to you.*”

The ESRC Seminar Group – *Managing Careers in the Year 2000 and Beyond*.

Also in 1995, a seminar group, convened by John Arnold¹⁸, and supported by the ESRC, was established. This group, comprising academics and practitioners (from both the private and public sector), sought to answer the question: what will careers become ? Its subsequent report – *Managing Careers in the Year 2000 and Beyond* – appeared in 1996, published by the IES¹⁹.

The report begins with an interesting assertion (p.1): “Everyone has a career, not just those dwindling sections of the community with orderly and progressive sequences of work experience...”. However, it continues [*ibid.*], “Careers, as the lifetime experience of individuals and as pathways through occupations and organisations, are in a state of profound change.” What is interesting about this introduction is not the obligatory allusion to macro socio-economic trends, but rather the particular definition of career offered, which harks back to the interests of the Chicago School with its distinction between the work career and the ‘life career’ (and the relevance of the concept in all social settings). This is, perhaps, unsurprising given the involvement of Audrey Collin in these seminar groups. In a supplementary note to

¹⁸ A key author in establishing graduate career development as a legitimate field in its own right in the early 1990s.

¹⁹ See also Arnold (1997) *Managing Careers into the 21st Century*.

Charles Jackson (IES) appended to an early draft of her contribution to the ESRC report²⁰, she argues: “Before discussing ‘what careers will become’, we need a baseline understanding of what ‘careers have been’.” [Collin, 1995b].

Following Hughes (1937) Collin goes on to distinguish between the subjective and objective career, defining the former as the ‘observable’ career, “by which is meant the movement and personal progress of individuals, or the routes taken by classes of individuals, through the external and internal labour markets *via* sequences of jobs” [*Op. Cit.* 1]. She defines the subjective career as individuals’ “experience and interpretation of their ‘objective’ career in terms of their social, ethical, and religious values; assessment of their own capabilities; their (changing) sense of self, understanding of the situations they are in and interaction with them; their relationships; and their orientation to time (whether past, present or future)” [*ibid*]. As Collin continues (p.2):

“Moreover, the ‘subjective career’ is the story individuals tell themselves about their ‘objective career’ in relation to the rest of their lives. Its evolving story-line pulls all their disparate past and present experiences, with the potential futures they generate, into what is for them a meaningful and coherent whole. This story influences their decisions and so moulds their ‘objective career’”.

As Collin concludes (p.3), the macro-environmental and organisational changes which have impacted the organisational career, have “major implications for the ‘subjective career’ – for the way individuals see themselves, their past, present and future, and for the ‘story’ they tell to give meaning and coherence to their lives.”²¹

This distinction between the subjective and objective career is referred to in the *Managing Careers* report. As such, it is acknowledged that there is a need to understand what is happening to careers since a) individuals’ identities are shaped by their career experiences, and b) human adaptability is stretched to its limit by the imposition of new institutional structures. However, it is also interesting to note that the report’s authors continue to believe that the ‘death of careers’ is largely a problem for the white male middle classes !

²⁰ Entitled ‘The Changing Nature of Careers: What is a career ?’

²¹ This point, of course harks back to Young, R & Collin, A (1992) Interpreting Career; Hermeneutical Studies of Lives in Context. Praeger, Westport, CT.

The report goes on to consider the ‘forces for change on careers’, and concludes (p.13) that “...enormous and varied forces for change are effecting the nature of careers. [The] net effect of these changes is a widening diversity of career patterns and experiences.” The authors also conclude that “careers are not dead, but undergoing transformation – a broad conception of the career is [therefore] necessary and of increasing importance” [*ibid*].

Turning, therefore, to the question: what will careers become ?, the report summarises what other researchers also concluded around this time. That is, the ‘old’ models are becoming less relevant for most, though will [probably] continue to survive for some (e.g. graduates and senior managers); increased mobility, less security, and a greater diversity in contractual forms will become the norm; and, for many, there will be a greater need to ‘take ownership’ for self-managing their careers.

When considering how employers should be ‘managing’ these new careers, it follows that the report draws attention to the need for greater role clarity and explicit articulation of individuals’ responsibilities as well, of course, as a framework for lifelong learning/improved training and development (to improve individuals’ career worth as compensation for the loss of career security). The report also draws attention to individuals’ responsibilities insofar as information gathering, self assessment, and self-presentation are concerned. In these respects, the report is, again, little more than a summary of received wisdom, as reported elsewhere in this chapter.

Futurologists, Polemicists and Harbingers of Doom !

While UK academics and practitioners were focused mainly on the immediate consequences of the ‘new deal’ - and, thus, the changes in policy and HRM practice which would need to be brought about to cope with the ‘new organisational reality’ - others were more interested in looking to the career management challenges of the next century. In the U.S, the Academy of Management Executive published a collection of papers in a special edition of the journal - Vol. 10(4) - in 1996, and invited contributions from a number of recognised authorities in the field of career theory and development.

In their paper *Career Pandemonium: Realigning organizations and individuals*, Brousseau *et al* claim that “careers and career opportunities are in pandemonium resulting from the progressive destabilization of relationships between people and organizations” [*Op. cit.* 52]. They go on, however, to caution against ‘throwing out’ old, static concepts – since this would increase pandemonium - and, instead, suggest

taking a more pluralistic approach to the management of careers. They recognise, of course, the need for individuals to become more resilient (or tolerant), and thus to improve their self-knowledge as a means of gaining greater ‘ownership’ of their career. However, they argue that the key, especially for organisations, is to accommodate different types of career opportunity structure.

Strongly echoing Schein (1978) – and, to some extent, Kanter (1989) - Brousseau *et al* also conceive of four ‘career concepts’ – linear, expert, spiral, and transitory. The linear career is, largely, akin to the traditional bureaucratic career; the expert career assumes lifelong commitment to a specific occupational field or specialty; the spiral career involves individuals making periodic cross-functional moves; and the transitory career implies many different career moves without a clear logic or rationale linking them. They go on to explore the fundamental motives which lie behind such differing career models, and argue that organisations can benefit from operating a multiplicity of career models since this, in turn, enables them to meet the varied interests of diverse populations. This, they claim, creates a stronger link to corporate strategy and, thus, the potential for competitive advantage.

Nigel Nicholson, in his paper, *Career Systems in Crisis: Change and opportunity in the information age*, echoes the central theme of Brousseau *et al* when he argues (p.40) that “Career development in the 21st century will take place against a background of unprecedented variety of organizational forms, as old and new models persist side by side”. However, he goes one step further than Brousseau *et al* by at least briefly questioning the possibility that the ‘old’ and ‘new’ models are something of a myth. To illustrate the point, Nicholson offers a distinction between old and new paradigms (see table 4 below).

Nicholson argues that the traditional paradigm represents the large, bureaucratic (divisionalised) corporation, whereas “in the new paradigm, the organization is portrayed as a network of connected goals and structures, with a lean core servicing various units, alliances, and outsourced functions” [*Op. cit.* 41]. However, he questions whether either paradigm truly represents reality.

Table 4. Management Careers – old and new paradigms²².

| | Traditional Paradigm | New Paradigm |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ORGANISATION | Bureaucracy | Network |
| ROLE | Generalist | Multi-skilled specialist |
| COMPETENCIES | Systems, operations | Teamwork, development |
| ASSESSMENT | Inputs | Outputs |
| PAYMENTS | Jobs | Skills |
| CONTRACT | Security for commitment | Employability for flexibility |
| CAREER MANAGEMENT | Paternalistic | Self-managed |
| MOBILITY | Vertical | Lateral |
| RISKS ? | Rigidity ? dependence ? | Stress ? anarchy ? |

Having reviewed the myriad factors leading to the apparent demise of the ‘old paradigm’, Nicholson goes on to consider how companies’ career systems can be designed to cater for both the employee’s and the employer’s needs. He argues the case for choosing between a range of different types of career system (see table 5).

Table 5. Career Systems Types²³.

| TYPE | EFFICIENT | NEGLECTED | RESTRICTED | MECHANISTIC | POLITICAL |
|----------|---------------|---------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| CRITERIA | Human capital | Vacancy chain | Caste | Ladder | Tournament |
| CULTURE | Market | Tribal | Segmented | Bureaucratic | Ludic |
| EFFECTS | Competition | Superstition | Alienation | Fatalism | Careerism |

Nicholson systematically outlines the workings of each of these five ‘types’ of career system, and explains the organisational culture in which it is prevalent. He then asks (p.47): “Towards which of these models do the current trends in organizational change lean?”. This is an inevitably flawed question since, as Nicholson points out, we are, in fact, seeing various effects because several such systems can coexist in a single organisation, albeit with distinctly different psychological contracts implied for different people ‘occupying’ different ‘sub-systems’.

²² Adapted from Nicholson (1996:41).

²³ Adapted from Nicholson (1996:45).

Nicholson concludes, then, by arguing that for career systems in the 21st century to be effective, there needs to be a clear linkage between what he calls the *people system*, the *job market system*, and the *information system*. That is, there needs to be more information available to individuals about the career opportunities open to them in any one organisation, and more information about the people and job market systems. As he argues, without such information, organisations will ultimately be the losers.

The questions about 21st century organisational form and, as a consequence, organisational careers, are the focal point of most of the remaining papers in this AME special edition. However, different authors focus on different key themes. Thus, in *Characteristics of Managerial Careers in the 21st Century*, Allred, Snow & Miles predict not only the demise of the traditional hierarchical organisation (and with it the traditional career), but also question the longevity of the 'network' organisation form. In its place, they argue, will be the 'cellular' structure, characterised by flat structures (even *no* hierarchies), cross-functional working, and entrepreneurial spirit. With this new structure, they argue, will come a new type of career, centred around knowledge-based technical specialisms; cross-functional and international experience; and a greater emphasis on collaboration, integrity and trustworthiness.

Meanwhile, in *Redeployment and Continuous Learning in the 21st Century*, Manuel London calls for increased investment in training and development to help employees gain self insight and develop 'career resilience'; and in *Protean Careers of the 21st Century* D T Hall heralds the birth of "a career that is driven by the person, not the organisation, and that will be reinvented by the person from time to time, as the person and the environment change" [*Op. Cit.* 8]. (That is, a hark back to the traditional developmental concerns of the mid-'70s, where the ultimate goal of the career is seen as 'psychological success').

Finally, by way of reference to, arguably, some of the most over-used phrases in the careers lexicon of recent years, Arthur & Rousseau – in *A Career Lexicon for the 21st Century* - consider the changes in our assumptions about careers. Though a somewhat circuitous and, oftentimes, simplistic paper, Arthur & Rousseau do introduce some interesting dualisms which, they argue, mark the difference between the 20th and 21st Century careers lexicons. In particular, their 21st Century definition of 'employment' (p.31) is evocative, namely that employment will mean: "A *temporary* state, or the *current* manifestation of long-term employability" [emphasis added]. (This alludes to a distinction I shall make later about the essentially temporal quality of the career).

Critique

In this chapter it has been shown that the traditional, core management disciplines have shaped career theory for much of the twentieth century - for example: the concept of matching individuals to roles (predicated on the assumption of stability of personality and, indeed, stability in the organisational environment); the notion of a life structure or life course, within which there are predictable (self-developmental) tasks and stages; and the view that 'negotiation' between individual and organisations, for mutual benefit, is possible (and indeed desirable).

Each of these perspectives has clearly added value to the development of career theory as a discipline in its own right, at least until the late 1970s. However, it could still be argued that since the time of the Chicago School, theorists have consistently over-simplified their conceptions of career. Significantly, theorists have failed to deal adequately with the interaction between individual and organisation, except in a rather simplistic, 'negotiated' sense. Perhaps even more significant has been a widespread failure to embrace fully Shaw's (1931) situational and chronological components. Thus, as Collin (1998:414) suggests, "organisations [have been] reified, treated as objective, rational, goal-seeking [and] separate from the individuals who comprise them." This, she argues, is a fundamental error: organisations and individuals cannot be separated since the former plays a significant part in the construction of the latter²⁴.

This over-simplification of the career concept has brought with it oftentimes very limiting assumptions. As the marketing materials for the 'New Deal in Employment' conference illustrate, huge epistemological assumptions were commonly being made:

"The 'unwritten contract' (sometimes called the 'psychological or implied contract')... has changed dramatically in many sectors. Short-term, casual employment is replacing longer-term relationships and has seriously undermined the concept of career. At the same time, skill requirements continue to change dramatically in many areas of work... With career development increasingly seen as a personal responsibility, rather than an organisational one, who is taking responsibility for developing these higher levels of skill? What is the effect on employees' motivations of greater insecurity, and on their loyalty to the firm? What are the overall consequences for the economy and society – a more mobile, entrepreneurially-oriented workforce, or a workforce discouraged from making long-term investments in skills?"

As even a cursory examination of this extract illustrates, too much was being made at this time of '*dramatic* changes' in '*many* sectors', as with the contention that the career concept has been '*seriously* undermined'. Considerable assumptions are also

made about the shift in the ratio of casual to permanent employment, the ubiquity of 'greater insecurity', and the career intentions of individuals *vis a vis* 'long-term investment in skills'. It is interesting to note that much of the literature on these subjects, to this day continues to represent either populist prescription (e.g. Kiechel, 1994; Waterman, Waterman & Collard, 1994 – as above) or research largely into only *one* industry sector, namely banking/finance [e.g. Cressey & Scott, 1992; Ezzamel, Willmot & Lilley, 1994; Herriot, 1995; Herriot & Pemberton, 1995; Hughes, 1995; Hunter, 1995; Rajan, 1995; Sparrow, 1995; Storey, 1995].

This over-simplification, however, extends beyond the 'New Deal in Employment' conference. The Institute of Employment Studies' reports also do not really advance the debate insofar as organisational responses to this apparent 'new deal' are concerned and, instead, appear primarily interested in how organisations can overcome the *chaos* of the 'new reality' with yet more "frameworks and schemes" in order, perhaps, to (re)create the illusion of stability and predictability. The motto seems to be: where there is 'chaos', let us attempt to control it !

Devolving responsibility for career management from the centre (HR/Personnel) to line managers and individuals is all very well, but is perhaps little more than an admission on the part of practitioners of the failure of the centre, or worse still, intellectual abdication on the part of academics. Thus it is in the IES report #287 (p.7) we are told: "The concept of the 'career', and the idea that organisations and communities develop skills in their employees or members through an accumulation of experience, are ancient ideas" - ancient in the pejorative sense, not in the historical or archaeological sense !

As the synopsis of the ESRC seminar group (1995/6) and the Academy of Management Executive special edition (1996) illustrate, even some of the most eminent and prolific writers in the field of career theory and development have not moved the debate, in a 'paradigm-busting' way beyond a re-visitation of traditional (largely 1970s) concerns. Much of what they present is either simplistic in its prescription or, again, not really incisive enough in its conceptualisation. Of this latter group, Nicholson (1996) perhaps stands apart. As he notes (p.42):

"There is a mythical and unreal quality to both [old and new] paradigms. The traditional model was only rarely found in a fully articulated form. AT&T's elaborate career system is a much quoted example. Yet even in such classic cases there were always people who would find the model did not

²⁴ In the context of this thesis, of course, this is a view with which I wholeheartedly agree !

apply – for example, specialist professionals, plateaued managers, and many women. To this extent, the model represents an ideal type rather than a widely operating paradigm. In short, the traditional model has always been an operational rarity. Is the new paradigm any less mythical ? Perhaps some software and high tech companies meet the ideal, but talks with HR specialists and managers of leading organizations reveals a deep and growing cynicism. Many see the rhetoric of the new organization as running well ahead of its practice.”

As Herriot & Pemberton (1995:9) comment: “A whole new language has developed over the last fifteen years, a form of management-speak which actively seeks to misrepresent reality”. Absolutely! And as Herriot (1995:5) concludes: “Presentational language is necessary but not sufficient. Only if the reality of the employment relationship is contractual rather than coercive will the conditions for [dealing] be present.” Indeed.

In other words, as Herriot seems to imply, the ‘reality’ of the ‘new deal’ – (in itself predicated on the existence of an environment conducive to ‘new dealing’) – can only be apparent to us if certain organisational and situational (and, I would argue, discursive) pre-conditions are met.

In her (1995) ‘New Deal in Employment’ conference paper - ‘New’ individuals for the ‘new deal’ ? - Collin, it seems, is keen to challenge the very possibility of new dealing (and thus, by implication, the new deal). She argues that the rhetoric of the new deal implies that individual and organisation are separate entities *capable* of negotiation. Thus, to accept unquestioningly the reality of the new deal is also to deny the role of the organisation in constructing the individual. As she suggests (p.1): “Organisations not only influence the characteristics of individuals but are also implicated in the construction of the concept of the individual: changes within them in their particular historical context would be expected to lead to a re-construction”. Again, perhaps not surprisingly, I agree entirely. It follows that Collin therefore calls for a new approach to the study of careers which addresses the following:

“awareness of the significance of the ‘subjective career’; the development of appropriate research approaches for the study of subjective experiences (e.g. contextualist and constructionist, interpretative, biographical, narrative); [and] the incorporation of research carried out in this way into career theory and career management practice” [*Op. cit.* 3]

It is essentially to these issues that this thesis now wishes to speak.

CHAPTER 3

PHILOSOPHY, METHODOLOGY

& METHOD

PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES

Introduction

The most difficult task in this research has been to crystallise the theoretical lens through which to analyse the data. Perhaps not surprisingly, my focus has shifted from time to time, as I have realised both the benefits and drawbacks of particular perspectives, and as I have struggled to understand what my data has been telling me. This, of course, has often served to throw up fundamental epistemological issues and, at the point of each new insight, has left me wondering whether I should disregard all that has gone before in order to focus on the single perspective that has commanded my attention at that particular point.

Recently, however, I have been reminded of the value of eclecticism, and the usefulness of asking questions of the data which cut across different perspectives. As Hatch (1997:xi) suggests, taking such a position “broadens intellectual horizons and stimulates the imagination, both of which help to build knowledge and feed creativity. Learning to appreciate and rely upon multiple perspectives increases tolerance for the views of others and the capacity to make positive uses of the diversity multiple perspectives bring to [theory] and to life in general.”

In order to demonstrate how my particular theoretical lens has evolved, in this chapter I begin by making reference to those perspectives which influenced my research in the early stages. It is important to note that I am not attempting to synthesise or integrate these perspectives, rather to show how they have contributed to my understanding, and raised useful and challenging questions. However, it is worth emphasising that, throughout the majority of the research, my position has, at one level, remained fairly constant. My ontological position has been that, in the social realm, reality is socially constructed, and from an epistemological perspective I argue we need to talk with our research subjects and negotiate meaning since knowledge must be gained through interpretation. Thus, my philosophical orientation is toward Social Constructionism and, from a methodological perspective, toward an

understanding of the processes by which reality is constructed. Specifically, I view apparent regularity/uniformity in the social realm not as evidence of immutable laws of nature, rather as the result of myriad social norming processes which are historically and culturally specific. Thus, 'reality' is that which is constructed from human experience, brought to life through language - e.g. through the transmutation of rhetoric into discourse, the institutionalisation of such discourse, and the facilitation of a shared social sense through repeated engagement with such discourse.

It follows that I would describe myself as a contextualist-interpretivist researcher whose inclination, from a theory-building perspective, is toward Discourse Analysis.

Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology and Hermeneutics

In the early stages of this research, I was interested in the ways in which social actors conceptualise their reality, and thus my interest was more with the subjective than objective career. As a result, three broadly symbolic-interpretivist perspectives had an influence on my thinking - Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology, and Hermeneutics. The following comments serve to illustrate what I took out of these perspectives.

Phenomenology - (a position which recognises the possibility of multiple realities) - rejects the notion of structure as external from and a constraining force on human action. Instead, individual perceptions of social reality are the focus of attention, with anything else seen as an artificial construction in the mind of the researcher/scientist. This perspective is exemplified by Schutz (1972) who argued that individuals' perceptions of social reality can only be understood by comprehending their daily 'streams of experience'. He argued that each person has at her/his disposal a unique 'stock of knowledge' which (s)he applies to a social situation, and which therefore determines the meaning to be derived from that situation. Thus, Schutz argued that the focus of analysis should be on individuals' unique biographies, and not on a consideration of external 'structures' which govern behaviour. He also argued that language not only allows individuals to articulate the uniqueness of their streams of experience, but also facilitates the distribution of commonsense knowledge; that which binds human beings together in a common bond of understanding.

My reading of Phenomenology served to embed several assumptions which have been enduring throughout the research. First, that 'individual' and 'organisation' should not be separated and reified, since to do so implies – somewhat simplistically - that one (the 'organisation') has an influence *over* the other (the 'individual'). Second, that, intuitively, it is more interesting to study what individuals perceive to be their

reality than it is to impose the frameworks of social science onto the phenomena we study. Third, that in making sense of the world (and their place within it) individuals do not take at face value what they see but rather filter their views of the world through their stocks of knowledge of the world, developed through years of experience. Fourth, that in order to understand the individual and her/his career we should focus not on the objectified sequence of titles or positions held over time, but instead on how they talk about their vocational experience in the form of biographies (*career stories*). Finally, that we each have 'access' to some form of collective, commonsensical knowledge of the world, upon which we draw in order both to describe our view of reality and, indeed, negotiate it.

Ethnomethodologists assert the primacy of commonsense understandings of everyday life, and thus elevate individuals' everyday experiences to the centrestage of analysis. Their main concern is with the methods by which people make sense of their situation and how they sustain an 'orderliness' (Cicourel, 1973) in their dealings with others. They have no interest in general propositions which go beyond the study of everyday life as a phenomenon in its own right and, similarly, they are not concerned with causal explanations of observed patterns of social activity. Instead, they are concerned with "how members of a society go about the task of seeing, describing and explaining order in the world." [Zimmerman & Weider, 1971:289]. Specifically, Garfinkel (1967) emphasised the role of language in the process of accounting for the situational or contextual specificity of meaning – the 'indexicality' of meaning. As a result, the analysis of conversations has become a central concern of Ethnomethodology [e.g. Sacks, 1972, 1974, 1979; Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984]. Thus, for conversation analysts, the things people say are the focus of attention rather than being taken as a transparent route to the 'truth' of their 'actual' experiences or 'underlying' attitudes.

My reading of Ethnomethodology (and later, conversation analysis) shaped my thinking from three perspectives. First, we should not privilege the theories offered by social science to account for individuals' action, but focus instead on individuals' own accounts; (or at least we should be cautious about asserting that lay accounts are corrigible and thus the legitimate focus of critique by social scientists) [Blaikie, 1993]. Second, while we should be cautious about the value of causal analysis in the social realm, we should nevertheless consider why speakers oftentimes produce regular and orderly accounts of their everyday experiences (i.e. we should consider the performative as well as constructive qualities of talk). Third, we should pay particular attention to the context-bound, situational specificity of language, and thus seek to understand the indexical reference points of individuals' talk.

Historically, Hermeneutics has been concerned with the translation of texts, especially religious texts, in order to uncover obscure meaning. In contemporary social science, Hermeneutics has also been seen as relevant to the interpretation of social records. Modern Hermeneutics has also come to embrace the linguistic aspect of understanding which, in turn, has led to the perspective of General Hermeneutics, namely the study of understanding itself.

While the perspectives of phenomenology and ethnomethodology serve to highlight the value of approaching lay accounts 'in their own right', my reading of hermeneutics reinforced that one ultimately must (in some fashion) go beyond the mere reporting of social actors' constructions in order to build what Douglas (1971) might have called 'useful' theory. In other words, there comes a point at which lay accounts *must* be seen as corrigible, otherwise one would end up in a rather extreme relativist (or even transcendental) position²⁵. At the least, there is a need to recognise what Giddens (1976) called the *double hermeneutic*, namely that lay accounts are imbued with the theories of social science, and vice versa²⁶.

It follows that while our focus in interpreting the accounts of social actors should not necessarily be to 'uncover obscure meaning', there *is* a need to disentangle lay and social science accounts of social reality since the one is implicated by the other. In other words, we must question the 'purity' of commonsense knowledge, and ask: from where does this commonsense knowledge derive ? (Or more accurately, upon which discursive resources or interpretative repertoires²⁷ do individuals draw in the construction of 'everyday' commonsense accounts ?).

Social Constructionism

The perspective of Social Constructionism provides a useful framework both to bring together the key learnings I have taken from these classical traditions, and to begin to provide persuasive answers to the questions they generate. As such, it is worth here outlining a number of key issues. First, what is Social Constructionism ?

²⁵ See Husserl on the possibility of 'pure' understanding outside of social and historical context [Bauman, 1978].

²⁶ See also Hatch (1997) on the particular problems this creates for organisation theorists.

²⁷ The term 'interpretative repertoires' is taken from Potter & Wetherell (1987:149) as meaning "recurrently used systems of terms used for characterising and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena... constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions... [often] organised around specific metaphors and figures of speech".

In the broadest terms, Social Constructionism is a perspective which unites radical and/or critical approaches to psychology and social psychology which have emerged since the early 1980s - e.g. discourse analysis, deconstruction and poststructuralism. More specifically, there are a number of fundamental tenets which define the position.

First, a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge. As Burr (1995:3) suggests, such a position "invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us, to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation". It is, thus, a position which is in opposition to the traditions of Positivism and Empiricism since, essentially, it argues that perception is truth. Second, historical and cultural specificity. As Burr (Op. Cit. 3-4) suggests: "The ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific", and thus the way we see the world "depends upon where and when in the world one lives"²⁸. Third, knowledge is sustained by social processes. That is, since our knowledge of the (social) world is not derived directly from our observations of it, then people must construct knowledge between them. Thus, 'truth' is the product of "the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged..." [Burr, Op. Cit. 4]. It follows that language is of particular concern to Social Constructionists. Fourth, knowledge and social action go together. That is, it is possible to talk of many different social constructions of the world, each bringing with it the possibility of a different human action or response. As a consequence, some constructions sustain some patterns of social action and exclude others [Burr, Op. Cit: 5].

These broad tenets thus suggest a number of distinct features which are in marked contrast to traditional psychological or social psychological concerns. For example, since it is argued that who we are (or who we perceive ourselves to be) is what we construct ourselves to be, Social Constructionism is anti-essentialist: the position does not support the view that there can be a 'core self' which is 'discoverable'. Second, Social Constructionism is not concerned with static entities, such as personality traits or organisational structures. Instead, it is concerned with processes of interaction, and thus the processes by which knowledge comes to be constructed. And third - (and, perhaps, most important in the context of the specific positioning of this research) - language is seen as a precondition for thought.

²⁸ See also Foucault (1972).

Thus, as Burr (1995:6-7) suggests:

"Our ways of understanding the world come not from objective reality but from other people, both past and present. We are born into a world where the conceptual frameworks and categories used by people in our culture already exist. These concepts and categories are acquired by all people as they develop the use of language and are thus reproduced every day by everyone who shares a culture and a language. This means that the way people think, the very categories and concepts that provide a framework of meaning for them, are provided by the language that they use".

It follows, by extension, that Social Constructionists believe the person is also constructed by language. They therefore assert that language provides us with a way of structuring our experience of ourselves in the world; it makes possible the concepts we use to define ourselves; and, fundamentally, it allows (continuously) for alternative constructions of the self. Our sense of who we are is therefore derived from the interpretative repertoires available to us (Potter & Wetherell, 1987); and this sense of who we are is constantly changing given our exposure to and appropriation of alternative discourses and through a continual process of social negotiation. Furthermore, since our sense of personal history and identity arises out of culturally available narrative forms (see Sarbin, 1986; and Gergen & Gergen, 1984; 1986) we organise our experience in the form of stories, and thus we are dependent for our identity on the willingness of others to support us in these versions of events.

Summary

The perspective of Social Constructionism has a particular resonance in this thesis given the argument that a shift from one career deal to another brings with it the emergence of a new vocabulary which serves to redefine the nature of the career and, quite literally, an individual's sense of identity. It is also relevant insofar as it reminds us that the telling of career stories is not a representational act (revealing to us the 'truth' of subjects' experiences) but rather also a performative act (which constructs *versions* of truth).

It also follows from the above, and from previous sections, that my preference here is to theorise the organisation as a sociolinguistic domain, characterised by a complex of dynamic²⁹, 'interpenetrating discourses' [Parker, 1992]. As a result - and given my position that language constructs our (social) reality - I take the view that organisational discourses create apparent regularity, at least insofar as such 'structure' or 'regularity' is perceived by those who constitute the organisation.

²⁹ That is, they change over time, and are socially, historically and culturally specific.

It follows that to understand organisational 'culture' and context, we can argue for the need to understand organisational discourse. And, thus, to understand the individual (and the individual's view of self) we must seek to lay bare and understand the discursive resources or interpretative repertoires available to that individual in a specific organisational context.

If we take the view that work plays an important role in determining our views of self (position in hierarchies, progression versus others, satisfaction in what we do) then the social and linguistic context in which careers play out has a fundamental impact on who we think we are. It follows we can argue that one's ontological security (and sense of career self efficacy) is determined by the extent to which one has access to an appropriate vocabulary with which to describe, understand and explain the organisational culture, one's place within it, and one's role within it. Further, we can argue that the career has no 'fixed' reality outside of the context in which its meaning is articulated. Thus, when the context of careers changes, so too does the career, as indeed at some fundamental level does the individual's notion of self. It follows that when the conditions which support the old deal are in place, and the language of the old deal is consistent with these conditions, it is easy to construct views of self which are congruent with this reality. But when the conditions which support the resilience of one form of career deal are no longer in place, and a new rhetoric emerges which signals a new order, one's sense of self is fundamentally challenged.

The role of the career story, then, in the research interview is to provide both the researcher and the speaker with a *version* of speakers' temporal and contingent understandings. We need to gain access to these meanings by focusing on the action-oriented role of the language itself – i.e. its performative and constructive qualities. Thus, the career story should not be viewed as a transparent information channel with a representational relationship to individuals' (f)actual experiences³⁰ - instead, we should problematise the telling of the story and take the view that, in so telling, the career is continually being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed.

³⁰ This is a position most vehemently propounded by poststructuralists and postmodernists, building on the work of Saussure (1959) - see Derrida (1978; 1980); Rorty (1979); Foucault (1972).

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, in the broadest terms I would describe myself as a contextualist-interpretivist researcher, whose leaning - for the purposes of theory building - is toward discourse analysis. This assertion brings with it two key definitional problems, and thus the need to unpack this statement before moving on to consider briefly the nature of discourse analysis, and the methodological approach taken in this research.

First, contextualism. As Bryman, (1988: 64) comments: "[Q]ualitative research exhibits a preference for contextualism in its commitment to understanding events, behaviour etc. in their context. The implications of this... engenders a style of research in which the meanings that people ascribe to their own and others' behaviour have to be set in the context of the values, practices, and underlying structures of the appropriate entity... as well as the multiple perceptions that pervade that entity". Thus, I am describing myself as a 'contextualist' because I have a preference for understanding the contextual specificity or indexicality of the career and, thus, the relationship between espoused organisational values and discursive practices and the meaning individuals construct around the notion of career.

Second, interpretivism. As Denzin, (1994: 500) notes:

"In the social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself. Confronted with a mountain of impressions, documents, and field notes, the qualitative researcher faces the challenging and difficult task of making sense of what has been learned. I call making sense of what has been learned the *art of interpretation*. This may also be described as moving from the field to the text to the reader. The practice of this art allows the field-worker... to translate what has been learned into a body of textual work that communicates these understandings to the reader. These texts, borrowing from John Van Maanen (1988), constitute the tales of the field. They are stories we tell one another. This is so because interpretation requires the telling of a story".

Thus, I am describing myself as an interpretivist since a) I believe that in the social sciences 'nothing speaks for itself' - as we saw earlier in this chapter, the operation of the 'double hermeneutic' ultimately requires us to (in some fashion) go 'beyond' the text, in order to then set about the task of unraveling it's essence³¹; and b) the process of interpretation is, very much, and art not a science. Indeed, one of the challenges of

³¹ In this respect, therefore, I would stop short of aligning with Derridian notions that 'there is nothing outside of the text'.

such research which I find especially interesting is the continuous need to de-politicise one's readings of texts in order to provide a reflexive challenge to emerging arguments [Burman, 1991]. And third, given an emerging interest in narratology during the process of completing this thesis, I am particularly drawn to Van Maanen's notion that, effectively, research is about telling 'tales of the field'³².

The Constructionist's Perspective

As outlined earlier, I am therefore adopting in this research what might be termed the constructionist's perspective. This, as Denzin (1994: 508) points out, requires an orientation to purposive (theoretical) sampling, grounded theory, and inductive data analysis. This is the approach taken here.

Thus, as Robson (1994: 141) notes: "The principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgement as to typicality or interest. A sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her (*sic*) specific needs in a project. It is an approach which is commonly used in case studies". As will be outlined later, twenty four research subjects were identified (twelve in each case study organisation) on an entirely purposive basis. In short, organisational representatives in each case were asked to identify twelve graduates, aged 28-33, who would be willing to be involved in the interview process. They were not 'selected' in any fashion as to create a particular 'sample' on any kind of static dispositional basis, but simply on the basis that a) graduates (as outlined in Chapter 2) might have a particular 'take' on the 'new deal'; and b) the developmental research (e.g. Levinson, *et al* 1978) tells us it should have been 'interesting' to interview subjects in this age range given his proposition of the 'age thirty transition' (and indeed that has proven to be the case).

Grounded theory, a perspective developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) stresses "open-ended interviews, the sensitising use of concepts, and a grounded (inductive) approach to theorizing" [Denzin, 1994: 508]. This again is consistent with the approach I have taken in this research - very 'open', essentially non-directive interviews (or, more accurately, 'conversations') - see Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 163; yet with the sensitising use of concepts rooted in classical career theory (see appendices 2 & 6); and an inductive approach to theorising, in the sense that knowledge/theory is being sought from "a restricted class of things" from a limited number of people in a limited number of situations [Blaikie, 1993:133].

³² See also Wooffitt (1992) on the issue of 'telling tales' !

Case Studies

As mentioned at the outset, the main fieldwork for this research was undertaken in two case study organisations. Therefore, for the purposes of clarity, it is important here to specify my approach to case study research. First, what are case studies ?

In short, case studies involve the detailed investigation of a phenomenon in its context because, it can be argued, context is import to our understanding of social phenomena - indeed, context is fundamentally implicated in it [Hartley, 1994; Yin, 1981]. Thus, as Hartley (1994: 227) suggests: "The key feature of the case study approach is not method or data but the emphasis on understanding processes as they occur in their context".

As Hartley (*ibid*) goes on, case studies are "distinguished by their approach to theory-building, which tends generally (but not exclusively) to be inductive". They thus provide the opportunity to explore issues in depth (in context), and this allows for a more systematic development of theories of potentially more general interest". Thus, as Yin (1981) suggests, the method is much like detective work, and it is this detective work - the building of a detailed picture of 'motive, opportunity and method' which creates useful theory. Case studies are tailor-made, therefore, for understanding processes which are little understood, or where there is a need to shed light on a phenomenon, to illuminate it, and/or where there is a desire, through the case studies, to build theory [Hartley, 1994].

However, as (Yin 1989:62) points out: "The demands of a case study on a person's intellect, ego and emotions are far greater than those of any other research strategy". In my experience, this has indeed proven to be the case !

Finally, in this section, a word about interviews and transcripts.

Interviews

My everyday definition of 'an interview' is that it is, simply, a social situation in which two people come together for the purposes of learning something about each other. It is, thus, a situation in which the dynamic of a 'conversation' is immediately set up. However, as Jones (1995: 48) suggests: "An interview is [also] a complicated, shifting, social process occurring between two individual human beings, which can never be exactly replicated". It is thus, she argues, impossible, ultimately, to get at some objective notion of 'truth' that might be there "if only the effects of interpersonal

interaction could be removed" [*ibid*]. The interview, thus, (following Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 163-65) is an essentially unique and constructive act, in which the researcher and researched are active participants.

It follows that, in my reading of the research methodology literature I have been somewhat frustrated by an enduring, largely positivist/empiricist polemic on how to 'do' interviews in ways which limit bias (and thus preserve 'objectivity'); create a 'supportive' interview environment (in which the research subject will be more inclined to give the researcher 'true' or 'authentic' answers); and the need to avoid being 'too directive' in case one's questions create artifacts in the data. Thus 'open-ended' questions are ubiquitously claimed to be 'better' - [see Brenner *et al*, 1985; Burgess, 1985; McCracken; 1988; Silverman, 1985; 1993; Smith, 1975].

Clearly, the use of open-ended and infrequent questions inevitably allows for the construction of stories (Mishler, 1986) and this, of course, is key to research of the kind represented in this thesis. In addition, I would support the ethnographic view that we should seek, wherever possible, to create as long an interview as possible, with as few (directive *or* non-directive) questions as possible. This is what Jones (1985) calls 'depth interviewing'. Thus, as Parker (1992: 124) points out: "if the material is to be obtained from interviews [as opposed to documentary texts, for example] semi-structured interviewing is [of course] preferable". The key, however, is to ask 'useful' questions; questions which act as a stimulus to the production of rich narrative.

Thus, as Silverman (1993: 156) points out, ultimately, "the opposition between artificial and naturally-occurring data is another methodological red herring. Neither kind of data are intrinsically better than the other; everything [especially in the case of case studies] depends on the method of analysis".

My approach, therefore, has been to develop 'conversations' with my research subjects, albeit around a number of key themes which the career theory literature tells us should be 'interesting' and of some direct relevance to the exploration of the rhetorics and discourses of the 'new deal'. In particular, I felt that discussion around the subject of expectations on entry, over time, and for the future would surface particularly potent dialogue around the general topic of the changes of the employer-employee relationship (without, of course, explicitly positing to my research subjects the emergence of a new deal !)³³.

³³ The interview schedule (appendix 6) does not, of course, represent a schedule in the strict sense - there was never any intention of 'taking people through it' in rote fashion. Its purpose was simply to map out the range of questions that *might* be 'interesting' to ask at some point.

Transcripts

Finally, a very brief word on transcripts.

As Silverman (1993: 9) points out, transcripts are used to "understand how participants organise their talk". And as Heritage (1984: 238) suggests: "In enabling detailed and repeated examination of the events of interaction, the use of [transcripts] extends the range and precision of observations... It permits other researchers to have direct access to the data about which claims are being made, thus making analysis subject to detailed public scrutiny". They are also, of course, useful in that because they provide us with data that is in 'raw' form "they can be re-used in a variety of investigations and can be re-examined in the context of new findings" [*ibid.*]

However, beyond the obvious advantages of transcripts, the key point is that, in discourse analysis, they are essential [Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 165] since discourse analysis involves "repeated readings of [the] data". In addition, "the process of transcription itself can be helpful in forcing the transcriber to closely read a body of discourse" [*ibid.*].

Finally, a brief note on transcription style. In short, this is a very tricky issue, depending upon which 'strand' of the diverse field of discourse analysis one is aligned to. For conversation analysts, for example (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Wooffitt, 1992) a very detailed form of transcription is called for, in order to present for the reader an 'authentic' representation of both utterances and silences, inflexions and so on. This is what is often referred to as 'the Jefferson style' (see Jefferson, 1995).

However, others (e.g. Parker, 1996) suggest a less superficially rigorous notation regime. As he comments (Op. Cit 4): "much of the research in this tradition is rather descriptive, and a range of techniques from micro-sociology are used to make the description *look* more objective" !³⁴

³⁴ This comment forms part of a protracted and oftentimes heated methodological 'debate' with Potter during much of the 1980s (see also Potter *et al* 1990).

As will be discussed briefly later, while I started out trying to be 'authentic' to the Jefferson style, I soon found it to be incredibly time-consuming, and also found that it forced my early analytical endeavours too far down into the detail of individual utterances, and thus far away from a more holistic appreciation of the discourses operating in the texts I was analysing. In the end, I decided to transcribe my field audio tapes on the basis of what I heard speakers actually saying, without recourse to inflexion and other linguistic features.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

We turn now to a consideration of the specific field which has influenced the style of this research. Thus, as proposed earlier, *one* way of approaching the study of careers is to adopt a methodological perspective which is sensitive to the role of language in the construction of careers. Such a position allows us, at one level, to say something about the structure, form and function of social actors' 'accounts' and, at another, to speculate on the situational specificity of the linguistic environment in which such accounts are constructed. This perspective is Discourse Analysis.

First, we turn to some basic tenets of the field, and examine what is discourse; what is discourse analysis; and what discourse analysts do.

What is Discourse ?

A much quoted definition of discourse is that provided by Potter & Wetherell (1987: 7), namely that it comprises "all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds".

This, however, is a very broad definition, which simultaneously situates Potter & Wetherell's work in that part of the field of discourse analysis which is most influenced by Anglo-American 'ordinary language' theory [Wittgenstein, 1953; Austin, 1962]. Therefore, we should also consider others' definitions.

First, Parker (1990: 191) defines a discourse as "a system of statements which construct an object", or (1996:1) as "the many ways meaning is relayed through culture, [including] speech and writing, non-verbal and pictorial communication, and artistic and poetic imagery". This, of course, roots Parker's work in the French semiological and structuralist tradition, represented by Saussure, (1959) and Barthes, (1964; 1972).

Thus, Parker (1990; 1992) identifies seven key criteria for the identification of discourses, namely that a discourse: i) is a coherent set of meanings; ii) is realised in texts; iii) reflects on its own way of speaking; iv) refers to other discourses; v) is about objects; vi) contains subjects; and vii) is historically located³⁵. In addition, Parker suggests what he calls three 'auxiliary' criteria, which primarily appeal to those working from the perspective of radical or critical theory, namely that discourses: viii) support institutions; ix) reproduce power relations; and x) have ideological effects.

However, even this somewhat more explicit definition serves, for some (e.g. Potter *et al* 1990) to point to the theoretical reifications in Parker's position (re; the creation of 'objects') and, in turn, to Parker's 1990 distinction between 'discourse analysis' (as represented by Potter & Wetherell, various) and 'the analysis of discourse' represented by Parker (various) - which, perhaps not surprisingly, Potter *et al* (1990: 8) "expressly" oppose.

In drawing my own conclusions about definitional problems, I must recognise a preference for Parker's definitions, though would also embrace the following key points made by Burr (1995) which serve to take a less onto-epistemologically specific position. That is, "a discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Op. Cit 48). Thus, "discourses, through what is said, written or otherwise represented, serve to construct the phenomenon of our world for us" (Op. Cit :49). It follows that "[t]he things that people say or write, then, can be thought of as instances of discourses, as occasions where particular discourses are given the opportunity to construct an event in this way rather than that" (Op. Cit 50). As a result, "[d]iscourses provide us with conceptual repertoires with which we can represent ourselves and others [including] ways of describing a person as, for example 'feminine', 'young', 'disabled', 'gay', 'straight' etc..." [Op. Cit 141].

So, having outlined the key definitions of discourse, what is discourse analysis ?

³⁵ On this latter point, Parker's definition is, thus, very much situated in the Foucauldian tradition.

What is Discourse Analysis ?

As with definitions of discourse, there are, perhaps not surprisingly, quite divergent views on the question of what discourse analysis is. This, of course, is driven largely by the fact that the field is incredibly diverse, and has divergent philosophical and theoretical underpinnings.

Van Dijk (1985), for example, notes that discourse analysis probably emerged first as a recognisable discipline in its own right between c.1964-1972, and was built on the tradition of Russian 'Formalism' with its interests in anthropology, poetics and linguistics and, later, the theory of art and film [see Propp, 1928] and the French tradition of modern linguistics, semantics and semiology [e.g. Barthes, 1964; 1972]. However, as van Dijk proposes, its origins probably go further back still:

"Discourse analysis is both an old and a new discipline. Its origins can be traced back to the study of language, public speech, and literature more than 2000 years ago. One major historical source is undoubtedly classical rhetoric, the art of good speaking. Whereas the *grammatica*, the historical antecedent of linguistics, was concerned with the normative rules of correct language use, its sister discipline *rhethorica* dealt with the precepts for the planning, organization, specific operations, and performance of public speech in political and legal settings. Its crucial concern, therefore, was persuasive effectiveness. In this sense, classical rhetoric both anticipates contemporary stylistics and structural analyses of discourse and contains intuitive cognitive and social psychological notions about memory organization and attitude in communicative contexts." [Van Dijk, 1985: 1].

Others (e.g. Potter *et al* 1990) suggest that, in the context of individual and social psychology, discourse analysis began to be regarded as a recognisable discipline in the early 1980s, and they point (Op. cit 205) to "four distinct strands of work [which] laid claim to the title discourse analysis", namely: i) a strand linked closely with cognitive science and concerned with discourse processes (e.g. Van Dijk & Kintch, 1983); ii) a strand building on speech act theory and the organisation of talk (represented by Coulthard & Montgomery, 1981; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975); iii) a strand linked to social philosophy and culture analysis, notably semiology or post-structuralism (represented by Parker, 1992 and building on Foucault, 1971, 1972³⁶; and iv) a strand building on the study of the sociology of science and scientific action [as represented by Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Mulkay *et al*, 1983].

³⁶ Note that Foucault described his archeology of madness and medicine as discourse analysis.

At this time, Potter *et al* also suggest the analysis of discourse and rhetoric became increasingly established as an alternative perspective on classical psychological concerns, e.g. attitudes (Billig, 1987); and gender [Hollway, 1989]. And, as they comment (Op Cit 206):

"If this complication were not enough, discourse analysis... has [also] been used as a summary term for research in speech act, sociolinguistic and social psychological approaches to language areas... and in reviews of almost entirely independent developments in structuralism and semiotics. This illustrates how the terms 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis' can be part of contrasting theoretical and disciplinary debates and [so have] come to mean very different things".

In similar vein, Burman³⁷ (1991: 326) notes:

"[I]t is very difficult to speak of 'discourse' or even 'discourse analysis' as a single unitary entity, since this would be to blur together approaches subscribing to specific and different philosophical frameworks. Insofar as there can be said to be commonality, however, these approaches are united by a common attention to the significance and structuring effects of language, and are associated with interpretive and reflexive styles of analysis".

Burman (*ibid*) goes on to determine three key strands in the field, namely: i) the Foucauldian strand "which takes discourse as social practice, and as constitutive of the construction and shifting grounds of meaning"; ii) a Lacanian re-reading of psychoanalysis "where a focus on the fragmentation of subjectivity can be used to inform the multiple and contradictory ways the patterns of power relations of age, gender, class, and 'race' are realised in social life"; and iii) a strand, as we have seen, arising from the Anglo-American ordinary language philosophy of Austin and Wittgenstein.

However, still others (e.g. Burr, 1995: 47) see the field differently³⁸, and come back (as earlier) to a distinction which, essentially, is between the tradition represented by Potter & Wetherell (1987) and Parker (1992). Thus, there is one tradition building on the French philosophical traditions of structuralism and post-structuralism (e.g. Adlam, *et al* 1977; Henriques *et al*, 1984³⁹), and represented by those interested now in issues of identity, selfhood, personal and social change, and power relations (including Hollway, 1989; Parker, 1992; Weedon, 1987; and Walkerdine, 1987). (This, as Parker (1996: 2-4) denotes is a tradition which focuses on the 'rules of discourse', laying bare the archeology and genealogy of ideas, and so how knowledge

³⁷ A close colleague of Parker in the late 1980s / early 1990s.

³⁸ It is worth noting that Parker (1996) and Burr (1995) agree entirely on the demarcation of the field on this basis.

³⁹ Parker's (1996: 2-4) distinction.

of things came into being). And, second, Burr (*ibid*) identifies a strand more concerned with the performative qualities of discourse (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Reicher, 1987) which, as Parker (*ibid*) notes, follows Gilbert & Mulkay (1984) and work on the sociology of scientific knowledge, first introduced to psychology as an alternative to traditional attitude research by Potter & Wetherell in 1987.

As Parker (1996: 40) notes: the difference between these two approaches is that, essentially, the tradition represented by Potter & Wetherell seeks to "restrict its analysis to a particular text rather than locating it in wider discursive practices which regulate and police people's understandings of themselves" (which is, of course, the position adopted by Parker).

Thus, for the researcher new to the field of discourse analysis, "terminological confusions and complexities abound" [Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 6]. And, given its multi-disciplinary heritage⁴⁰, defining Discourse Analysis, therefore, is not an easy task. Thus, as van Dijk (1997:1) suggests, the "ubiquitous presence of the term 'discourse' in the humanities, the social sciences and even the mass media makes it a rather 'fuzzy' notion".

However, as Burr (1995: 47) asserts, "these different approaches are not incompatible; they simply reflect the different concerns of people working essentially under a 'social constructionist' umbrella" (Burr, 1995: 47). What unites them is a focus on the importance of language and, more particularly, a concern either with function, construction, or variability.

So, finally in this section, we now turn briefly to the question as to what discourse analysts actually do.

What Do Discourse Analysts Do ?

It follows from the previous discussion that 'what discourse analysts do' is not necessarily a straightforward issue. Indeed, it is also important to emphasise that, as a result, "there is no *method* to discourse analysis in the way we traditionally think of an experimental method or content analysis method. What we have is a broad theoretical framework concerning the nature of discourse and its role in social life"

⁴⁰ For example, sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, and literary criticism. See, for example, van Dijk (1985; 1997); Potter & Wetherell (1987); Fairclough (1992; 1995); Burman & Parker (1993); Brown & Yule (1983); Silverman (1993).

[Potter & Wetherell, 1987:175]. Moreover, as a result, "we often find writers borrowing ideas and moving between theoretical frameworks" [Parker, 1996:2].

Clearly, however, at an abstract level, as Burr (1995: 47) notes, discourse analysts tend to focus on what she calls the "workings of language", and thus on either function, construction, or variability.

More specifically, as Parker (1996: 1) suggests: "Discourse analysts study the way texts are constructed, the functions language serves and the contradictions that run through it. [They study] spoken and written texts, [and] all the kinds of symbolic material that we use to represent ourselves to each other. [Thus] discourse analysis... leads us to question the way subjectivity (the experience of being and feeling in particular discursive contexts) is constituted." (*ibid*).

As such, Parker advocates (1992: 6-20) that discourse analysts should attempt to do, in their analyses (and subsequent theorising), some, or all, of the following: i) explore connotations through some sort of free association (perhaps with others); ii) consider what 'objects' are referred to in the talk; iii) specify what types of person ('subjects') are talked about in the discourse; iv) speculate on what they can say with this discourse, or what you could say if you were them; v) map a picture of the world the discourse presents; vi) identify where different discourses overlap, and thus constitute what looks like the same object, referred to in different ways; vii) refer to other texts and other discourses to elaborate on the nature of that discourse; viii) look at how and where the discourses emerged; ix) consider how the discourses have changed over time, and how that change tells a story; and x) identify institutions which are reinforced or subverted when this or that discourse is used and consider who loses or gains by the employment of a particular discourse. This is the spirit in which the Chapters 5-7 have been conceived and the analysis undertaken.

From a methodological perspective there are, of course, implications for the theoretical positioning which discourse analysts take, and there are two key issues I would wish to comment on here. First, to the issue of objectivity, Burr (Op. Cit 160) notes that: "objectivity is an impossibility, since each of us, of necessity, must encounter the world from some perspective or other (from where we stand) and the questions we come to ask about that world, our theories and hypotheses, must also of necessity arise from the assumptions that are embedded in our perspective". Thus, the positioning is one of researcher-involved, rather than researcher-outside of the phenomenon, and this requires, at some point in the research report a reflexive self-challenge to the particular thesis constructed by the researcher-writer, including what

is absent as well as present in the researcher-writer's reading and thesis construction [see Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 28]. Second, to the issue of the aims of the research, I would support Burr's view (Op Cit 162) that "[m]any social constructionists believe the aims of research should become not the discovery of 'facts', but the mobilisation of the research process towards a different goal. The goal [thus] becomes a pragmatic and political one" and thus, ultimately, the research / the analysis should be "evaluated not in terms of whether [it is] an accurate or truthful account of reality, but in terms of how useful and liberatory such an analysis might be." This is an issue I shall return briefly to in Chapter 7.

Some Conclusions

The preceding sections illustrate that, while at the early stages of research, it is, perhaps, more logical to be concerned with the performative qualities of talk, and thus be sympathetic to the position exemplified by Potter & Wetherell, ultimately, if we accept that the social and institutional forms of the past hundred years or so have shaped our contemporary careers discourses, we must also seek to understand the history of the old in order to appreciate the rhetoric of the new. In other words, context is everything and, essentially, we must go beyond the mere reporting of the talk of careers stories or the micro-sociology of the process by which careers are reconstructed. Thus, we must also consider carefully the relevance of the position exemplified by Parker.

Thus, Parker (1992: 22) illuminates for us that "[t]he advantage of discourse analysis is that it reframes the object... and allows us to treat it not as truth, but as one 'truth' held in place by language and power". in the context of this research, therefore, discourse analysis allows us to reframe the notion of career and consider the degree to which ideas of permanent employment, hierarchical progression, continuous development and so on are simply versions of the (contemporary) truth of career, held in place for specific practical, political or ideological reasons by organisational rhetoric and institutional power. These issues, to me, are ultimately more interesting (albeit more complex to 'get one's mind around'), though to me, they are, in Burr's words, more liberatory or emancipatory in their nature, and thus potentially of more pragmatic 'relevance' to us in the longer term.

Of course, this positioning does raise broader questions. As Burman (1991: 339) points out:

"The meanings elaborated by the discourse analyst are not purely the analytical invention of the analyst, but... rely on interpretive resources (and politics) imported from elsewhere... Hence... the discourse analyst is irreducibly tied to his or her own politics for the alliances and orientation displayed in the selective presentation of discursive strategies and outcomes. Notwithstanding the political ambiguities of the theoretical frameworks informing discourse analysis, the politics of the analyst will out".

THE PILOT STUDY

Introduction

From an early stage in the research process it became clear that to 'get at' the transient nature of subjects' career stories (and thus the time and context-bound nature of their constructions of career) it would be necessary to carry out a number of interviews in order to then analyse the talk produced. What was less clear, however, was the particular form of interview or 'interview schedule' which would yield rich data for the purposes of analysis. In short, it was decided, therefore, to first carry out a pilot study, with the express purpose of determining an appropriate interview style (and length) and range of questions to put to research subjects in the main fieldwork. To provide a degree of focus to these interviews, a semi-structured interview schedule was constructed, built around a number of key themes from the literature, as outlined below.

At the earliest stages of this research my main concerns were with the classical careers literature and, in particular, the Chicago School of Sociology's interests in the chronological, situational and relational components of career [Shaw, 1931; Hughes, 1937]. These concerns led to an interest in the distinction between the *work history* and the *career story* (and thence to an interest in work history analysis and biographical research methodologies), as well as the influence on the career of significant others. In addition, I maintained an interest from my MBA studies in that part of the careers literature concerned with graduate careers and, specifically, the notion of high expectations on entry to employment (Arnold & McKenzie-Davey, 1992) followed by 'dashed hopes' [Herriot *et al*, 1993]. This led to an exploration of the career phase/stage literature (e.g. Crites, 1976) as well as the life span developmental psychology literature [see Sugarman, 1986] and, as a result, I became interested in theories of adult development and, specifically, those events which

determine developmental tasks - e.g. Buhler (1935); Eriksson (1959; 1963; 1978); Havighurst (1953; 1972; 1973; 1982).

These various influences led to a simple interview schedule being produced for the pilot study (appendix 2), comprising ten questions built around seven key themes, covering the development of the work history (objective career); expectations on entry to employment, over time and for the future; and the influence of significant others and key events/milestones on both the subjective and objective career - after the pilot study was completed, these themes formed the basis of the enhanced interview schedule used for the main fieldwork (appendix 6).

Objectives

The objectives for the pilot study were, essentially, four-fold:

1. to test out the thematic framework for the main fieldwork, and determine the degree to which the themes identified in the early stages of the literature review, and embedded in the 'interview schedule' for the pilot study, would be likely to generate rich data
2. to explore subjects' expectations on entry to employment, and over time (and if they changed over time, to explore how and why); and to understand their typical future career expectations
3. to explore the influence of key people, events and experiences (both inside and outside the workplace) on the subjective and objective career, and
4. to understand the degree to which the *career story* was orderly/disorderly (following Cicourel, 1973) and thus to speculate on the reasons why this might be the case, and the extent to which it might influence the range of questions developed for the main fieldwork

The Organisations

In total, seven organisations were approached during April-June 1995, all of whom had participated in research into fast-track graduate careers, carried out by Cranfield's Human Resources Research Centre [Doherty, Viney & Adamson, 1995]. Six organisations expressed interest in the research, and the first three to offer a guarantee of access to carry out a series of in-depth interviews were the Bank of England, Abbey National Plc, and Shell International.

It was felt that three organisations would provide sufficient candidates for interview, and so it was decided to go with these three organisations.

Note: IBM subsequently offered access for the main fieldwork, although they did not express an early interest at the pilot study stage. The Bank of England very quickly offered access also for the main fieldwork and so, after a brief period considering the value of those two organisations to the evolving research questions, it was decided that the main fieldwork would be carried out in the Bank and IBM.

Research Subjects

The research subjects for the pilot study, thirteen in total - (6 male, 7 female), were all graduates within the age range 26-33 (though typically 29-31). This, therefore, was consistent with what the developmental psychology literature (e.g. Levinson *et al*, 1978) tells us ought to be an interesting age group to study.

For further details on the research subjects, see appendix 3a.

Methodology

In brief, each research subject was interviewed for approximately one hour and, almost verbatim in each case, was asked the ten questions contained in the interview schedule. All interviews were tape recorded (with the permission of the participants), and the tapes subsequently transcribed.

Once the taped interviews had been transcribed in full, the transcripts were then read and re-read several times in order to identify key themes emerging under each of the seven main headings

Findings

The 'findings' of the pilot study are summarised in appendix 3b. In addition, some of this data has also been published elsewhere [Adamson, 1997]. The data is not presented here, however, for three main reasons:

1. since I am arguing in this thesis that context is fundamentally important, it would be difficult, if not inappropriate, to draw any meaningful conclusions from the data generated in Abbey National and Shell which would add direct value to the analyses of the Bank of England and IBM case studies in Chapters 5 & 6.

2. since I did not do any pilot work in IBM, there is a lack of symmetry in the dataset and thus it would not be appropriate to enter into evidence here the data from the Bank
3. as indicated above, the interviews at this stage were highly directive and sought to elicit commentary around a number of specific issues which do not necessarily speak to the main points of this thesis⁴¹. Thus, at one level, the data is not relevant here and, at another level, we would have to be suspicious of it since some of the questions asked - (and the manner in which they were put) - will have created artifacts in the data which would render the analysis of it (in the spirit of discourse analysis) obsolete.

However, there a number of key lessons from the pilot study which had implications for the main fieldwork, and so they are reported here.

First, from a methodological perspective: i) semi-structured interviews worked well; however ii) the format had the potential to create artifacts in the data; and iii) sometimes, the interview questions seemed too narrow/specific, and thus 'closed down' discussion or truncated the 'natural evolution' of the story subjects were 'weaving'.

Overall, however, the pilot study proved not only to be useful in identifying the range of themes and issues to be explored in the main fieldwork, but also reinforced that richness of data, rather than volume of data, should be the focus. It also served to suggest a range of inter-related research questions which subsequently influenced, to some extent, the revision of the main 'interview schedule' and the development of a vast range of supplementary questions for the purposes of probing, as outlined in appendix 6.

In addition, from a theoretical/analytical perspective, I began to consider the possibility that any (reported) commonality of experience amongst my research subjects was being produced discursively, and thus any such commonality would be inevitable given pervasive careers discourses. In other words, the answer to my earlier research question: *how do graduates make sense of/bring meaning to their careers* was, perhaps, to be found by examining the organisational and discursive context in which their stories were produced.

⁴¹ These issues, largely around the possibility of developing a phase-stage theory of the early years of graduate careers, resulted in a paper on this subject - Adamson (1997).

THE MAIN FIELDWORK

Introduction

As the main fieldwork progressed from data collection through to analysis proper, I began to find that my earlier interest in conversation analysis was driving me too far into the detail of the structure and content of the talk itself and, thus, preventing a more holistic appreciation of the story. Influenced no doubt at this time by my reading of Social Constructionism and Discourse Analysis, new questions began to shape the preliminary analysis of the main fieldwork.

Toward the end of the main fieldwork, as I was considering how to frame the analysis of the data, it became clearer that subjects' talk appeared to be characterised by an interplay between two 'competing discourses': that of the 'old' and that of the 'new' deals. For example, when talking about expectations on entry to employment, and through the early years of the career, subjects appeared to be constructing the work history in reference to old deal assumptions about career success. However, as they projected into the future and considered how their careers would evolve, many subjects painted a different picture of the organisations for whom they worked, and with it, at times, a quite different view of self. Encouraged by Mary-Jo Hatch (Cranfield), it thus seemed important to consider this 'struggle' between the discourse of the old deal and the rhetoric of the new, including the implications of this 'new' career deal for individuals' constructions, and presentations, of self. It also seemed I would ultimately have to say something about the institutional dynamics of language and power (Parker, 1989; 1992) and thus organisational context [cf. Hatch, 1997].

Thus I arrived at a number of questions which informed the main fieldwork, namely: i) what do subjects talk about when asked about their careers ?; ii) how do they define 'career' ? e.g. do they talk about (directly or indirectly) an old and new deal ? if so, how does it manifest itself ?; iii) is the discourse of the old deal [trust, loyalty, commitment, conformity, security, promotion, training & development, care, going the extra mile - a relational contract] referred to ?; iv) is the rhetoric of the new deal [long hours, added responsibility, broader skills, tolerance of change, rewards for performance, a job - a transactional contract] referred to ?; and v) how do subjects talk about success / career success; themselves; the organisation and of organisational change ?

Objectives

The main fieldwork, therefore, set out to address three key objectives:

1. To search for evidence of the discourse of the old deal and the emergence of the rhetoric of the new, thus enabling a robust challenge to the new deals debate
2. To begin to understand how people participate in the construction of their careers and, specifically, how they go about that task of reconstructing careers in light of the emerging rhetoric
3. To identify similarities and differences in the construction of careers (and career self identity) in the two case study organisations, thus enabling a discussion about the way(s) in which organisational context is implicated in careers and identities

Methodological Choices

As indicated earlier, it was thus decided to base the main fieldwork around semi-structured interviews. However, unlike at the pilot stage, these were designed as two-stage. In total, twenty four subjects in two different organisations participated in the interviews. The reasons for these decisions are outlined below.

Apart from the obvious need (as outlined above) to gain access to subjects' perceptions of social reality by means of interaction with them, the decision to base the research on a series of interviews was also influenced by Weick (1995). That is, we can argue that meaning is produced in the moment of articulation, and thus, to gain access to subjects' understandings, we need to 'get at' this temporal process of construction. Indeed, as Potter & Wetherell (1987:33) suggest: "the central tenet of discourse analysis is that function involves construction of versions, and is demonstrated by language variation. [Thus], even a single interview shows considerable variation if analysed thoroughly enough". Semi-structured interviews were therefore chosen in order to leave open the option for subjects to talk freely without being overly constrained by structure (which, in itself, would run the risk of creating artefacts in the data).

Two-stage interviews were chosen for two key reasons. The first reason for adopting a two-stage process was purely pragmatic, namely a recognition of the problems of getting people 'out of the business' for a single 2-3 hour interview session. Second, it was felt useful to provide an opportunity for subjects to reflect between interviews, since this might yield different constructions when some of the same issues were re-

visited in round two. If this were shown to be the case, it would be interesting to reflect upon those aspects of the career story which seemingly remained unchanged, and those aspects of the story which appeared to be reconstructed in the second round⁴².

Both of these decisions are consistent with the manner in which discourse analytic research proceeds. That is, since a key feature of discourse analysis is that data collection and analysis progress in cyclical fashion, it is important that the research design allows time between interviews for drafting and re-drafting of interview transcripts, reading and re-reading, and preliminary analysis [see potter & Wetherell, 1987: 158-175]. Thus, only after several drafts and readings, they argue, will the data provide insights and raise new questions which need to be addressed. Thus, the first interview allowed for the career story to be told, and for a limited number of questions to be asked. The second interview, which took place after the first had been transcribed and analysed, allowed more detailed and in-depth participant-specific questions to be addressed in round two, thus increasing the richness of the data

As to the number of research subjects involved in the main fieldwork, any approach to research which is driven by the detailed analysis of language necessarily requires a research design which is manageable. In short, given the nature of the research and, not least, the intense and time-consuming nature of transcription and analysis in the form of multiple readings and re-readings of the data, it was felt that twenty four research subjects would be more than sufficient to yield a rich and varied data set⁴³.

The reasons for choosing two ‘case study’ organisations were part methodological and part pragmatic. Given issues of scale and manageability, it was felt that two organisations would provide sufficient depth, and that these two organisations in particular would provide a fascinating context (for reasons outlined earlier in this thesis). More specifically, the opportunity to consider two organisational contexts also of course allowed for consideration of the similarities and differences in discursive context and, thus, the degree to which organisation-specific career opportunity structures and organisational rhetoric/discourses might produce particular constructions of career and identities.

⁴² In the event, this did not prove to be a particularly fruitful line of enquiry, especially in terms of the new deals debate. It is, however, something I plan to return to at some future date.

⁴³ This again proved to be the case and, it is worth noting, that the final amount of data presented for the purposes of constructing this thesis, is a small percentage of the entire data set.

Research Subjects

The following tables provide some background data on the research subjects.

Table 6 – Bank of England Research Subjects

| | |
|---|---|
| Subjects | 6 male, 6 female |
| Average age at (first) interview | 31 years, 6 months |
| First degrees | BA (5), BSc (4), MA (3) |
| Other qualifications | PhD (1), MPhil (1), MA (1), MSc (3), PGCE (1), professional diplomas (5) |

Table 7 – IBM Research Subjects

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Subjects | 7 male, 5 female |
| Average age at (first) interview | 31 years exactly |
| First degrees | BA (2), BSc (10) |
| Other qualifications | MSc (1), BTEC diploma (1) |

As can be seen, twenty four subjects participated in the main fieldwork, and they averaged 31 years in age. In addition, while they were all graduates, it is notable, perhaps, that in the Bank, they were quite significantly 'better qualified' than the subjects in IBM. Beyond an attempt to secure a degree of gender balance (primarily so as to reduce potential charges of gender bias at a later stage⁴⁴); and an insistence on age and degree qualification as criteria to take part in the research, no other sampling restrictions applied, not least since it would be inconsistent - given our emphasis on language - to go beyond this level and into what psychologists would refer to as the territory of static dispositional differences.

However, by way of context, it should be noted that subjects in the Bank worked across all of the main areas of the Bank, and in both wings, thus covering, for example, both banking supervision and monetary analysis. In IBM, research subjects were all nominated from the Services business, which was chosen primarily because it is managed centrally as a single 'business unit', thus making access easy to negotiate

⁴⁴ A point raised by Sue Vinnicombe, Chair of my Second Review Panel.

and sustain with the relevant, central staff (in three key locations: Portsmouth, Warwick, and London). It is also worth noting that the Services business comprises Software Development, Sales & Marketing, and Technical Engineering.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that in the remainder of this thesis, all subjects are referred to only by way of the pseudonyms created for them at the time of the interviews.

How the Main Fieldwork Unfolded

Having decided to conduct the research in the Bank of England and IBM, it was necessary then to identify organisational representatives in each case who would be able to provide a degree of context on the issues affecting the organisation; act as facilitators to enable access; and identify twelve graduates each to take part in the research. In the case of the Bank of England, the key contact was Julian Bishop, then Management Development Manager in the Personnel Division⁴⁵. For IBM, the key contact was Gavin Breeze, then HR Communications Manager & Careers Project Leader for the UK, focused on the IBM Services business⁴⁶.

The second task, with each of the organisational representatives, was to identify twelve graduates in each case who would be able and willing to participate in the research. In each case, the key sponsors were asked to identify graduates within the age range 28-33⁴⁷. No recommendations were made insofar as the mix of the groups was concerned, other than to suggest the sponsors seek to achieve a balance between male and female. (However, note: in the Bank of England, the sponsor chose to filter the sample to include 'low', 'medium' and 'high' performers, since one of the Bank's interests in the research was in any reported differences in attitudes toward career management practices in the Bank according to performance rating⁴⁸).

A letter of invitation to participate in the interviews was sent to nominated individuals (see appendix 4). In addition, each participant was sent a brief biographical questionnaire, designed to gather some base data on the work history to date, personal details, and educational qualifications (see appendix 5). Participants were also asked

⁴⁵ Supported by Roy Lecky-Thompson, Personnel Director and subsequently Merlyn Lowther, Personnel Director.

⁴⁶ Supported by Julie Hipkiss (HR Generalist, Services), Kate Farquhar, HR Director (Consulting & Technology Solutions) and Ann Grinstead (Group HR Director)

⁴⁷ For the theoretical reasons outlined earlier - cf. Levinson *et al* (1978).

⁴⁸ Though I did not purposefully analyse this issue in detail, I could see no apparent such distinction.

to submit a copy of their curriculum vitae (where they had one) in order to clarify the key components of the objective career/key stages of the work history⁴⁹.

The first round of one-to-one interviews then took place (spring/summer 1996), with all interviews being tape-recorded. Discussions were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule which, building on the pilot study interview schedule, explored ten key themes. The focus on questions about expectations was designed to 'problematise' (speculate on) the different discourses which (might have) applied then; which were in evidence now (1996); and which might apply in the future. The focus on significant others recognised the position of line managers in particular as the face of organisational symbolism, and the voice of organisational rhetoric and discourse, and thus I wanted to hear what subjects reported others said. And, third, questions about significant events were included since they oftentimes support and challenge individuals' assumptions, thus creating new constructions and/or crystallising aspects of prior/existing constructions.

It is important to note that while all interviews in both case study organisations were conducted with reference to the same interview schedule - (and thus there is a high degree of similarity at a thematic level) - *different* questions were asked at times as the similarities and differences in organisational context emerged. As discussed earlier, this is entirely in the spirit of the contextualist, interpretivist nature of this research. Since no claims are being made here as to the generalisability of the findings of this research outwith the contexts in which the research was conducted - (at least not below a theoretical/conceptual level) - there is limited (if indeed no) merit in presenting subjects in two different organisations with precisely the same interview stimuli.

Once the first stage interview was completed, the tape of the interview was reviewed, along with the biographical data collected before the interview, and notes taken during the interview. A first draft of field notes were then written up, and the taped interviews were transcribed in full. A broad brush thematic analysis was then carried out in order to generate a series of questions for the second stage interviews.

Second stage interviews were then conducted, with the two-fold objective of a) discussing any themes which time constraints did not allow for in the first interview,

⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that very few people (c.30%) had an up to date, external CV. In the case of the Bank, this appeared to be a function of the length of time many had spent in the Bank, and the feeling that having an up to date CV was not necessary since they did not intend leaving the Bank. In the case of IBM, more (c.75%) had internal CVs, since this was in line with company-wide standard practice, and a fundamental component of the internal job advertising/matching process.

and b) considering the follow-up questions generated in the preliminary analysis of the first stage interview. As at stage one, these interviews typically lasted one hour (though in several notable case, much more). Following the second interview, field notes were again written up, and tapes transcribed. Note: initially (at the pilot study and round 1 main fieldwork stages) the interviews were transcribed in full Jefferson format. Later in the process, a variety of other transcription methods were adopted as it became clear there was a need for a more holistic appreciation of the data (as commented earlier in this chapter).

As the research proceeded, an iterative analytical approach was taken, and thus the data were analysed over and over both between first and second stage interviews and, at some length, after the completion of the main fieldwork. In broad terms, this analytical process involved reading and re-reading the data many times over until key themes began to emerge: (in total, well in excess of 500 hours were dedicated to this pursuit alone). More specifically, this process of repeated reading began with the identification of instances of the vocabulary or metaphors of old and new deals (see Chapter 2). Thus, on the one hand, I began searching for talk which spoke to themes of trust, loyalty, commitment, conformity, security, promotion, care, 'going the extra mile' - i.e. the 'old' relational contract; and on the other, talk which spoke to themes of long hours, added responsibility, broader skills, tolerance of change, rewards for performance, a job - i.e. the 'new' transactional contract. In addition, through a process of free association (often with the aid of a dictionary and thesaurus) I considered repeatedly the commonalities and differences emerging (both within and between subjects' accounts) around the key themes of expectations, success, and so on.

In due course, this familiarity with the detailed content of subjects' talk allowed me to 'step back' from the data and consider also what was *absent* from the talk - i.e. the discourses, interpretative repertoires or vocabularies one would expect to see manifested but, for whatever reason, appeared not to be. This served, then, to allow a reconsideration of the function or purpose of subjects' talk, and thus allowed for a more critical appreciation of the 'effect' speakers were attempting to bring off through the particular construction of their stories. It also pointed up differences (or contradictions) in speakers' stories about the past versus the future, and thus served to highlight the points at which the vocabulary or metaphors of the old deal were being juxtaposed with the vocabulary and metaphors of the new: literally the point at which discourses were 'struggling' for pre-eminence, or the point at which individuals were 'struggling' to let go of the old and appropriate the new.

Over time, repeated readings of the text allowed me to become fully immersed in the data, and thus to appreciate both what was present in the talk, and what was absent. This also then allowed for speculation on the broader discourses to which subjects were appealing, and thus the larger 'grand narratives' of their careers and their lives which they were (re)constructing. This total immersion in the data therefore created the conditions within which it became possible to speculate at an intuitive level on the nature and meaning of the talk, and thus allowed (albeit very slowly and incrementally) the development of a 'reading' of the text which spoke to the wider themes of interest in this research.

This, then, in broad terms, is how the main fieldwork proceeded. In Chapters 5 & 6, extracts of subjects' actual talk are presented, and commentary provided. The main analysis and discussion, however, is situated in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has sought to outline the philosophical and methodological positioning of this research with a focus, first, on those fields which influenced my thinking in the early stages of the research - (Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology, Hermeneutics) - and second, Social Constructionism and Discourse Analysis. Learnings from my various readings have been outlined, and have provided a framework which addresses the positions and assumptions which have been enduring in this research, especially around my appreciation for the importance of language in the social phenomena we study. The chapter has also considered the design of the research, and the way in which the main fieldwork was carried out in order to 'lay bare', as far as is possible, the way in which the research was carried out.

In the next chapter we now look at the key contextual features of the two case study organisations and thus consider the antecedents to the emergence of apparent new realities. This, therefore, sets the context for a detailed reporting of the data in Chapters 5 & 6.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to provide some background to the case studies of the Bank of England (Chapter 5) and IBM (UK) Limited (Chapter 6). In the following sections, each of the case study organisations is considered from three perspectives: a brief overview of the organisation and its business; the graduate careers context; and organisational change. Finally, the purpose and organisation of the case study chapters is outlined.

THE BANK OF ENGLAND

Introduction

The Bank of England is the central bank of the United Kingdom. Founded in 1694, it was nationalised in 1946, and gained operational independence in 1997. The Bank's key function is to promote and maintain a stable and efficient monetary and financial framework, and in this regard it has three core purposes: 1) to maintain the integrity and value of the currency; 2) to maintain the stability of the financial system; and 3) to ensure the effectiveness of the UK's financial services.

As regards its first core purpose, the Bank is responsible for maintaining price stability through the management of interest rates, and thus meeting the Government's inflation targets. This is achieved through the execution of monetary policy, and is the responsibility of the Monetary Policy Committee, chaired by the Governor of the Bank. With regard to the second core purpose, the Bank plays a key role in ensuring the stability of the financial system by monitoring payment and settlement arrangements between financial institutions, and by working closely with financial supervisors both in the UK and abroad. In exceptional circumstances - e.g. to avoid systemic damage to the financial system - the Bank, following consultation with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) and HM Treasury, may intervene in the market as lender of last resort. The Bank's Financial Stability Committee (chaired by the Governor) is responsible for overseeing the Bank's work in this capacity, and the

Court of Directors is responsible for evaluating the risks involved in the Bank assuming the role of lender of last resort. In regard to its third core purpose, the Bank plays a key role in monitoring the effectiveness (and competitiveness) of the City and, in particular, the security of payment and settlement arrangements. It plays a key role in ensuring the City provides efficient services to businesses and, in particular, appropriate finance to industry and commerce, especially small businesses.

Since 1994, the Bank has been organised into two main wings: Monetary Stability (comprising monetary analysis and statistics) and Financial Stability (including financial market operations). These two wings are supported by Central Services. In addition, the Co-ordination Unit for Europe is responsible for co-ordinating the Bank's work on Europe (specifically in relation to the euro); the Centre for Central Banking Studies provides technical and teaching support to other central banks; and the Printing Works is responsible for printing Bank of England notes.

The governance and management of the Bank is the responsibility of a variety of different committees. The Court of Directors, comprising the Governor, two Deputy Governors and sixteen non-executive Directors, is appointed by the Crown and oversees the operations of the Bank, (excluding the formulation of monetary policy which is the responsibility of the Monetary Policy Committee). The Bank of England Act (1998) also requires the provision of a sub committee of Court, comprising the non-executive Directors (NedCo), whose responsibility is to review the Bank's performance in relation to its objectives and strategy, as well as its internal financial controls. NedCo is also responsible for reviewing the procedures of the Monetary Policy Committee and, in particular, for ensuring the Committee takes into account appropriate regional and sectoral information when formulating monetary policy. In addition, the Governor's senior policy committee (GovCo) and the Deputy Governors' management committee (ManCo) are responsible for overseeing the day to day operations of the Bank.

The Graduate Careers Context

Historically, the Bank of England has recruited about thirty five graduates per year into a general pool. It does not have a fast track scheme, and only in 1995 did it begin to recruit from the MBA market. (It is worth noting that, for many years, the Bank has experienced very low attrition rates: typically between 4-5%).

Traditionally, the Bank has adopted a very clear 'grow from within' policy, and a preference for developing long-standing relationships with its employees and, in

particular, its graduates. The key, strategic purpose for doing this has been to sustain a cadre of staff from which the future top management of the Bank could be drawn. An important, pragmatic reason for doing this is that the Bank has a preference for retaining people who will see, and therefore gain experience of, the ups and downs of the economic cycle.

While the much talked about 'pendulum' has, for many years, swung between generalism and specialism, in large part the Bank has traditionally recruited from a wide range of academic disciplines. While there has always been a need for specialists (e.g. PhDs) at entry level, the common view has been that generalists who can develop the skills of an *All Round Central Banker* have been the preferred choice. As a result, the career proposition in the Bank has long embraced mobility/portability, through the development of a broad range of analytical and problem solving skills, developed through a (potentially) wide range of rotational opportunities - most graduates will do two or three substantively different roles in their first four years, historically with an emphasis on banking supervision and surveillance (pre-FSA) and/or analytical work in the monetary analysis divisions.

Over and above the proposition of variety - and, indeed, the literally unique nature of the work of the Bank in the UK context - it is clear that many graduates are attracted to the institution by virtue of the opportunity to make a contribution to public policy and to work for an institution central to the management of the economy. As a result it seems many are attracted by the notion of 'doing something important'. However, whatever the attraction, as one sponsor put it: "They will always see that a few years at the Bank will be useful to their career. Having worked for the Bank is not a passport, but it *is* a good general apprenticeship for the City. I think they know that having the Bank on your CV is not a bad start".

Traditionally, graduates' careers were monitored by 'the Centre' (Personnel Division) from the time of the individual's first appointment, and throughout the first four years or so, up to and including the Bank's formal Development Centre and Appointments Board. During this time, members of Personnel Division's Officials Development Group (ODG) would meet with graduates up to twice yearly to discuss their progress and future moves. However, at the time of the research, the Bank was dismantling ODG (in order to devolve more responsibility for the management of careers to the line), and introducing a job advertising system (designed to bring more transparency to the internal market, and to reduce the dependency on the Centre to facilitate moves). That being said, the view at the time was that the Centre would continue to "interfere", as one sponsor put it, "in the internal graduate/Trainee Official market".

The ongoing role of the Centre (through wing-specific Staff Development Units - SDUs) would thus be to provide personal development advice and support to think through career options, rather than telling people which moves to make. To this end, it was conceived that graduates' careers would still be co-ordinated to some extent, but no longer 'centrally managed'.

As will be seen in Chapter 5, however, this apparent shift in policy and, indeed, the very definition of career, was far from clearly understood by many of the research subjects. Indeed, it seems that even among the sponsors things were not entirely clear:

"When we talk about forty year careers, we don't mean forty years. You can have a career until the Bank can no longer meet your legitimate ambitions. There will come a point where we can't... we're not willing to take that person beyond a certain point, either because we don't have the opening, or they're not good enough in our view to get beyond that point... We're looking to give people continuous employability in the Bank. At the point where the Bank cannot provide further opportunities, we will help people to improve their marketability outside. But I don't think we've yet sold in people's minds the concept that a lateral move is a good move. When they are required to make a sideways move they see that as bad. But you can't keep pushing people up the organisation... If it sounds like we are confused and mixed up in the middle of sorting ourselves out, that's because that's exactly where we are".

Organisational Change

In December 1993, Eddie George and Rupert Pennant-Rea (recently appointed as Governor and Deputy Governor respectively) along with the Executive and Associate Directors of the Bank, held a weekend 'think tank' session at Ashridge Management College, Hertfordshire, to consider the organisation of the Bank. This followed extensive discussion on the subject of the Bank's key functions with Court. Five months later, the Governor announced - in the staff newspaper - that the Bank would be split into two 'wings': The Monetary Stability Wing and the Financial Stability Wing. This created a clear division between two of the Bank's core businesses, namely monetary analysis and banking supervision & surveillance. This was, by all accounts, a significant change for the Bank and set in motion a series of sweeping structural and cultural changes which took effect over the coming three years⁵⁰.

Despite these sweeping changes there remained, however, much talk of 'one Bank', and this clearly exposed deep divisions among management and staff as to the future

⁵⁰ These changes were punctuated again in May 1997 when, four days after taking office, the Chancellor of the Exchequer tasked the Bank of England with the setting of interest rates. Two weeks later he announced the transfer of the Bank's responsibilities for debt and cash management to the Treasury, and the establishment of a new, and independent, securities investment board.

of the institution. It also exposed that senior management had little experience of leading or managing change.

IAN: I was fortuitously away just after the Ashridge changes were implemented, which I'm quite relieved of because the atmosphere in the Bank was pretty depressing. When I came back in the spring to talk to various heads of division, the mood in the Bank was appalling. It was so depressing. I suppose my view is fairly simple, the fact that changes were needed. I'm not sure they were all right, but I think they were very badly handled and I don't think there's a clear strategy from the top. I think the Bank is very badly led at the top, and I think that the quality of middle and senior management is also generally pretty poor, and that's because the Bank tends to promote people on technical ability and not on management ability. And so you notice that, when you have to go through a change like that, because the pressure had built up for so long, and then the change that comes is very drastic and rushed, and badly managed. Having come back and settled in and seen the changes in operation I actually don't think it's working particularly well. The idea was it would be a much more integrated place and work as a team in a sense, but I mean there's an enormous waste of resources in this place with people duplicating work, and I don't think that has stopped. I also don't think the Governor's aware of it.

JAMES: Well, I think the Bank is fairly disjointed. The Bank-wide strategy has been articulated, and that's fine at that level. But the way the rest of the Bank has tried to reform or reappraise what it does... well, I don't think it's been consistent. In the area I'm working in now, I think it's felt that we don't have a strategy, we're under-resourced. We're being expected to provide a service we can't really provide with the number of people we've got. So, on the one hand, the Bank is making public proclamations about the quality of supervision and where we're gonna be, yet it's actually reducing the number of staff year on year.

JEMIMA: There's no doubt the culture has changed. I mean, up to two years ago we had separate dining facilities depending on what rank you are ! You know, I mean... that was awful. I'm very glad that that's got rid of. You know you had to go on a particular floor if you were a particular zone [rank]. It was absolutely absurd. Uhm, and also, even still there is a little bit of that at meetings, you know, one sits in order of seniority round the table. But I mean I think that's changing, and you know people sort of call each other by their Christian names, which I think is much better. It's not gonna change completely until the people that have been here for thirty years and have been used to being called Mr Smith have actually left. But, I think, you know, one's got to accept that it's not going to change over night. So I think the cultural changes are a good thing, but I think they haven't worked their way through yet, so of course there are disadvantages about it taking such a long time.

The creation of the two wings and, with it, a resurgence in the importance of economics, served to create less mobility between the wings, and therefore fewer career options. There was, literally, a 'pendulum swing' away from a philosophy of generalism to a philosophy of specialism. Thus, economics became the '*de rigueur*' discipline, and economists the power-brokers. As a result, the 'death' of the formerly sacrosanct *All Round Central Banker* (the generalist, the amateur) was pronounced.

HUGH: The most significant change for me is that economics has become centreplace. And that matters a lot because... For some people, if they were only here to do research they were happy with the old world, because in the old world nobody really knew what the economist does and they just sat in their ivory towers and done what they done and then published what they did, and that was it, where, uhm... I was always interested in being here to affect things and uhm, to do good research, to do good research for policy not in itself to be published in the journals. And that matters a lot. And that's the main thing. Economics is now centrefold. Economics matters in all decisions where before lots of decisions weren't affected by it. So that's the key thing. The Bank's changed. It used to be a sort of Jack of all trades. You had to be a central banker, and know about supervision and economics and everything, but it's just changed. It's suddenly incredibly more exciting.

Driven partly by impending European monetary union, and thus competition from other European central banks, the Bank of England set about a significant de-layering of its middle management ranks⁵¹. This, of course, further reduced opportunities to move upward in the hierarchy. While this inevitably meant that poorer performers were 'weeded out', leading to a feeling of a more meritocratic institution there was, in parallel, a marked increase in the number of contract staff. Perhaps not surprisingly, this led to tensions between permanent staff and contractors and, arguably, exacerbated career mobility issues.

MARIE: I think the one sort of common factor in all of it is that change has hit all of the people on the cliff face straight in the face, and people at the top carry on as if nothing's happened. And I think just that gulf between what people are experiencing and the understanding of that at the top has just grown and grown. I mean, I don't blame them because they're probably all incredibly busy and we need a lot more people than we have to do the amount of work that's required, but I think it's led to a big fall in morale. And, people who previously had a lot of loyalty and commitment to the Bank are suddenly looking for a passport out, either to use immediately, or to hold in reserve. And, I think the influx of contract staff, while individually they may all be very nice, has been detrimental to sort of good analyst to analyst relationships. There's been a lot of rubbish talked about what people are paid, and also other terms and conditions, and mobility within the Bank. Contractors tend to come in to do one particular job, and they either have that contract renewed to do that particular job, or they leave, and so there's not nearly the flow of people between the two wings at analyst level, or even above that. And so people have become much more introverted, and much more... selfish I suppose. So, there are all these sorts of tribes or mini Bank groups developing. People don't feel there's anything very good happening. It's very difficult to get people to feel positive about anything outside their own area. You know, Arthur Andersen are in doing a quality assurance review, and KPMG are in doing a job evaluation exercise. I think people feel a bit beaten down. There's a sense that we can't find the answers to our own problems anymore if we have to get a professional in from outside.

Perhaps one of the most significant events of this period was the appointment (during 1993) of an external Personnel Director; an attempt by the Governor to bring a degree

⁵¹ This brought with it a reduction in the number of Official grades from six to three - Analyst, Manager, Director.

of professionalism to the Personnel function. While his appointment was short-lived (a little under three years) the new Personnel Director brought with him a significant shift in thinking, and initiated a series of key projects and reviews: job reclassification; pay review; and the replacement of formerly centralised career planning through ODG by wing-specific SDUs. Additionally, the Bank's 'forty year career' was loudly pronounced dead. As a result, job advertising was introduced, and staff were told to manage their own career.

HUGH: Well, we've had this very odd Personnel movement from one extreme to the other recently. We used to have this massive, centralised Personnel function, a bit like big brother sitting there moving pawns around a chessboard. Then last year we had this completely decentralised thing where essentially this central Personnel function just imploded, and people were just left to themselves.

KAREN: I think there is a feeling in the Bank of being unloved. There is a crisis of morale really, it isn't good, and it hasn't been helped by the fact that they've rearranged all the career development side, and no-one really knows what's going on. For the last year I think people are just thoroughly fed up with that. It's very difficult to go from a very sort of paternalistic employer to be perhaps a more hard hitting commercial employer without affecting morale, but equally, you know, pay is not great really by City standards, but you would expect that. So I think people feel they are losing all the benefits and not getting it on the pay side you know because we're pulled by the public sector pay freeze. Some of the reasons for working for the Bank are going. There is a lot of work as well and it's not getting any easier. So I think it is a very difficult time.

However, in the summer of 1995, it was announced that the 'radical' new Personnel Director was leaving, to be replaced by an internal appointee.

NAOMI: Well, there's one thing probably worth flagging because it won't be in your knowledge base since it was only announced this morning is that Roy Lecky-Thompson is leaving, to be replaced by an internal Bank appointee, which is Merlyn Lowther. The subtext to that has to be that you cannot divorce your Personnel planning function from an understanding of what the Bank actually does in practice. What structure will underpin that I don't know, but there's an admission of defeat and a need to backtrack. Yes, we've probably done some things to increase the professionalism of the Personnel function, but we've probably gone too far and need to bring it back to be more in touch with what the Bank actually does in practice. The problem with Roy was that, as customers, we didn't see what was happening. There's been various reviews, you know Officials' pay, job evaluation, and Roy just didn't appear at any of these. Now, I don't know what his tactic was, whether he did a lot of background work and then just sat back. But all people saw was Bank people, insiders, leading these things. And so I think, well my interpretation is people thought: well why have we got him there then? We can do it ourselves. Now that might not be the interpretation, but that's the interpretation on the street. So, people are now very happy that Merlyn is going to take over; that an insider is going to take over.

Finally, in the spring of 1995, the Bank commissioned an external agency to carry out a far-reaching attitude survey. This was the first time the Bank had conducted such a

survey in its entire three hundred year history. In short, the results were not very positive⁵² - indeed, from a career development perspective, they were all but disastrous, as the following extracts from the survey illustrate⁵³:

"What career development ? Is there a career for most of us anymore ?"

"The flatter management structure and the apparent need to rid the Bank of anybody over 40 years old makes us ask whether career development is actually a thing of the past"

"Unless you have an economics degree, career development is a sham. There are lots of carrots, but they're usually taken away by means of moving the goalposts"

"Having some formal career development system would be a distinct advantage. However, it presupposes that senior management are actually interested in giving staff a varied and interesting career"

"People who have been in the Bank for more than a couple of years joined on the basis that if they worked hard and did well they would progress, not quickly, but steadily. Now we are told that this deal has been cancelled unilaterally. Those of us who have accepted a below-market rate of pay for years on the basis of the promise of job security and career progression are now being told that we will get neither. It's outrageous"

"As a graduate entrant to the Bank I was offered a long term career with considerable mobility and appropriate in-house training. I now consider that such long term career development has disappeared"

"I joined the Bank with the hope of merit-based career development. It's an illusion. Values and skills such as creativity, initiative and judgement are penalised and regarded by many as heretical. There is no future in the Bank for graduates"

"Career development has seemingly evaporated post-Ashridge with every person for themselves. This is disconcerting, having been told many times that the Bank is taking a keen and active interest in your development. Say one thing and do another..."

"The Bank's upper echelons constantly express amazement at the demoralised state of its staff. The cause is self evident: there is no longer any career development. I work well but no longer have any prospects. I would love to have a challenging job and to feel I am getting somewhere. Instead, it is my earnest desire to get out"

In light of the above comment about the apparent disconnect between the Bank's senior management and its employees, it may be worth reflecting on what the then

⁵² Only 28% of staff felt that promotion prospects were good; 61% believed that advice and guidance on career development was inadequate; and 47% did not believe the Bank had been honest with them about career prospects. [Source: International Survey Research Ltd. (1995) internal attitude survey for the Bank of England].

Deputy Governor, Howard Davies, said, following the survey, in an article in the Bank's internal magazine, *The Old Lady*⁵⁴:

"The Opinion Survey responses to the questions about the state of staff morale in the Bank were disappointing, to say the least. Only 4 per cent of respondents thought that morale could be said to be good across the Bank... Is the Bank such a dismal place to work ? Is it really true that 96% of our staff have to force themselves into the office each day ?...

The first thing to say is that we are not alone. While the Bank's readings were particularly adverse, there is mounting evidence that employee satisfaction across the UK has declined markedly in recent years and, indeed, is significantly worse than in almost any other comparable country...

One key message which I took from it [the survey]... was that we have communicated to staff a message that the Bank is no longer a 'jobs for life' service-based culture. But we have not yet replaced that culture with a new set of norms and expectations. As a result, many people here are confused about their career prospects. To anyone arriving in the Bank from the outside world, so to speak, there is something odd about this diagnosis.

By most external standards the Bank of England is still a very stable culture, with a great number of long-serving staff, and relatively low turnover. This institution is changing, of course, and will continue to change... We are, in that respect, part of a global trend... It would seem, therefore, that many Bank staff are more anxious about the future than any objective analysis would suggest they ought to be."

Postscript

Since this research was conducted, the Bank has continued to go through a considerable amount of change, driven partly by the importance of its role in formulating monetary policy and setting interest rates, and partly given preparations for monetary union and the introduction of the euro. As a result of this sharpened focus and, indeed, the likelihood of intense competition from other central banks following the recent decision of twelve nation states to adopt the euro, the Bank is becoming a 'leaner' organisation. At the time of the research, it employed a little under 3,500 staff in its main offices in the City of London, plus a further 1,000 at its printing works in Debden, Essex. By 2001, these numbers had fallen to a little over 2,250 staff in the City, and about 500 in the printing works - as compared with a total of 5,300 full time staff in 1983, and 7,000 (its highest level) in 1970⁵⁵.

⁵³ Reproduced by kind permission of the Head of Personnel Policy, Bank of England.

⁵⁴ 75th anniversary issue, March 1996.

⁵⁵ Roberts & Kynaston (1995:203).

While in 2001 the Bank hired 40 graduates and 30 mid-career, experienced hires⁵⁶, it is clear the institution is (and will continue to become) a very different place to that which many of the research subjects joined in the mid-late 1980s. As the Governor, Sir Edward George, commented in his foreword to the Bank's 2001 Annual Report:

"We are very conscious of the cumulative impact on staff over recent years of externally driven changes to the Bank itself... Over the last year, there has been very little let up in the pace of change, and inevitably morale in some parts of the Bank has been affected. We of course have a public responsibility to ensure on a continuing basis that the Bank remains an effective institution and maintains the highest standards of efficiency. However, we should now be able to look forward to a period of consolidation, and in that newer and more stable environment we very much hope that where morale has suffered there will be a significant improvement in the coming year - indeed, we are determined to see that happen".

IBM (UK) LIMITED

Introduction

IBM (UK) Limited is the wholly owned UK subsidiary of the International Business Machines (IBM) Corporation, based in New York. The company was incorporated in 1911 as the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company (C-T-R), a consolidation of Computing Scale Company, Tabulating Machine Company, and International Time Recording Company. In 1924, CTR became International Business Machines (IBM).

IBM's stated mission is to maintain an industry leadership position in the creation, development and manufacture of advanced information technologies, including computer systems, software, networking, storage devices and microelectronics. To deliver this it has 320,000 staff (as of end 2000⁵⁷), and operates in North America, Asia Pacific and EMEA (Europe, Middle East & Africa). In the UK its head office is in Portsmouth, and there are seven other locations in England and Scotland.

IBM's key businesses are Strategic Outsourcing (the strategic management of IT services on behalf of major corporate customers); Integrated Technology Solutions (the strategic application of networks, servers, software and management tools); and Storage (area network solutions for managing high volumes of data). In addition, the company concentrates on Business Innovation Services (consultancy services supporting eBusiness, CRM and supply chain management); Personal Computing

⁵⁶ Source: Bank of England Annual Report (2001).

⁵⁷ In 1986 this figure exceeded 400,000. Source: Rodgers & Shook (1986).

(hardware and services to support networked PCs); and Next Generation (a function providing support to businesses developed around the Internet). Beyond these core products and services, IBM also plays a lead role in helping governments improve business and citizen access to technology - (in the UK its key clients include the Ministry of Defence and the Police Force); and it is a leading technology financier.

For much of the first seven or so decades, IBM went from strength to strength, and developed into the most significant IT company in the world. As Heller (1994:62) comments: "The IBM of the early Eighties was a place of inexhaustible pride. Like the Roman Empire at its zenith, IBM was rich with the fruit of past conquests and supremely confident of new victories". Spectacular growth between 1950-1984 (during the service of F.G 'Buck' Rodgers) saw revenues climb from \$250m to over \$50bn⁵⁸. And in the UK, Edwin Nixon led the company to £1.6bn in revenues by the end of the 1980s, and in so doing trebled employment⁵⁹. However, as outlined later, this would all change by the early 1990s.

The Graduate Careers Context

IBM has long been an active player in the graduate recruitment market, and in the UK in the mid-1980s was recruiting several hundred graduates per year. Following poor business results in the late 1980s/early 1990s, however, this figure fell to nearer 100, before steadily climbing back up to c.150-200 by the mid-1990s.

Traditionally, the company has not had a fast track graduate scheme, and has not regarded graduates necessarily as feedstock for senior management positions. Instead, graduates are regarded simply as good 'raw material' with potential to develop valuable skills and competencies over time. As such, graduates and non-graduates are not differentiated when it comes to assessing potential: the *Higher Management* and *Higher Technical* accelerated development programmes launched in the early 1990s, for example, identify a wide range of individuals on the basis of potential, regardless of entry point.

Historically, IBM had a very formalised career structure for its employees; as one sponsor put it: "very much an *up and stay* type model". This model was characterised by clearly signposted 'career points' which individuals would be expected to reach, after a particular time. Thus, there were clearly defined career paths, demarcated by specific tenure-based milestones and rights of passage. As a result of continued

⁵⁸ Rodgers & Shook (1986:15).

growth and prosperity in the company, at least up until the late 1980s, opportunities were continually being created, and thus individuals' careers continued to 'point upward'. In addition, there was a strong 'jobs for life' culture and, not surprisingly, the company experienced very low attrition rates.

However, by the early 1990s things changed, and it became apparent that the 'up and stay' model no longer fitted well with the business strategy. As several layers of management were taken out - (reducing from seven layers in some areas, to as few as two or three) - a much flatter organisational structure came into being. Thus, as one sponsor put it: "if you move to a flatter organisational structure, there's no point having a hierarchical career structure. The two become incompatible very quickly".

Traditionally, graduates in IBM (UK) have not experienced any formal degree of centralised career management - e.g. active, centrally-driven rotation around different functions or businesses. Instead, the assumption has been that they would spend the first few years in a single line of business or function getting to know that organisation and developing core skills. They would then move through a series of roles, within the same function/business. 'Career Managers' - (line managers with responsibility for coaching and mentoring) - were available to offer advice, but not from the perspective of directing or managing individuals' careers *per se*. Thus, graduates would not explicitly come into the organisation with the expectation of rising through the ranks into a managerial role. Instead, they would actively be told there is little or no differentiation between graduates and non-graduates and, thus, success would be determined (for all) by ability to deliver results.

This focus on delivery was reinforced by IBM's practice, in the early 1990s, of recruiting its graduates on four year fixed term contracts rather than on a permanent basis. Thus, the essential proposition has not really been: come to IBM for a world class career, rather: come to IBM for a world class *start* to your career. The contract therefore provides graduates with an opportunity to develop, train, and acquire skills. No guarantee is offered that, at the end of the primary term, the contract will be renewed⁶⁰.

Thus, while IBM traditionally had a meritocratic jobs for life culture, it has been less clear what individuals might expect by way of a longer term association with the

⁵⁹ Heller (1994:64).

⁶⁰ The decision to transfer an employee from contract to permanent status would, in large part, be determined by the annual Contribution Management Programme, in which the outputs of all employees, and thus contribution to the company, are assessed.

company. As one sponsor put it: "[In the past] IBM turned out good organisational people, and we all learned to meet the informal criteria the organisation used to judge success". Now, however, "this notion of 'keep your nose clean and do a good job you will get a permanent contract', that's not the case within IBM".

In recent years, the shift to flatter career structures seems to have brought with it an understanding that upward movement is no longer possible for most people. Thus, as one sponsor put it: "what I think has come about is a huge degree of realism... they understand that everything isn't upward. That's not possible". The emphasis now, therefore, is on indicating a broad notion of a 'route map' as to where a particular job *may* take an individual in the longer term, as well as on developing skills and competencies which are valuable to the customer, rather than mapping out a hierarchically driven career, demarcated by a series of destination jobs. Thus: "If they can't add value to the client, then they're not employable. I grow my value if I grow my skills, and if I grow my skills I position myself for opportunity".

Organisational Change

For over seven decades IBM Corporation maintained a world leadership position in nearly all of the markets in which it chose to operate. As a result, it generated intense customer loyalty, and seemed destined to be forever regarded as one of the world's most successful companies.

However, in the early 1990s, the company's fortunes turned dramatically as it lost \$7.8bn in two years - in 1991, it was losing \$7.75m a day, and in 1992 that rose to \$13.4m per day. As a result of the dramatic losses, John F. Akers, then Chairman, resigned and there began a significant management re-shuffle. This included the appointment of Lou Gerstner as successor to Akers in April 1993 - the first non-IBMer to lead the company. Gerstner, along with many other 'outsiders' in senior positions, made significant restructuring decisions. He was also not beyond making hugely symbolic moves, as the *Financial Times* (2.3.95) reported: "Nine months ago International Business Machines stunned the advertising world by announcing that it had sacked all of its 42 advertising agencies around the globe and given all the work - along with worldwide billings of \$600m - to a *single* agency".

There followed a huge downsizing programme. In the UK, this meant reducing from 18,500 permanent employees and 200 fixed term contractors at the end of 1990 to 8,600 permanent employees and 3,000 fixed term contractors by the end of 1995.

At the time of the huge losses, many blamed Akers for his lack of experience given that he had risen rapidly through the ranks as much, it seemed, by luck as through competence: (as Akers himself later said about one of his many leaps up the organisational ladder: "I didn't understand a lot, but I got the exposure"⁶¹). As a result, "performance deteriorated on every single significant corporate measure, financial or non-financial, over the Akers years" [Heller, 1994:342]. Other factors, however, played their part⁶²: first, the force of the 'second wave' of computer technology, spearheaded by the likes of Apple, Intel and Microsoft swamped IBM. In addition, we can point to the forces of globalisation (which IBM did not respond quickly enough to); a lack of innovation and, in particular, very long product development lifecycles (which meant IBM was often very slow, or even late, to market); and a fundamental misunderstanding of customers leading, for example, to a dramatic under-estimate of the demand for personal computers. As a result of these forces, IBM's customer base changed dramatically. Where once the adage was: 'nobody ever got fired for buying IBM', the emerging customer view was that other, newer competitors had better products, which they brought to market faster, at a price and service level which offered better value.

A somewhat blunter version of events is provided by one of the research sponsors:

"[The changes were] due to a number of factors; fundamentally to do with IBM's arrogance. We believed our own publicity. We actually thought we were into compound growth going on forever, and customers would always come to us. But we had to downsize the company and we therefore had to break with some fundamental beliefs about ourselves and the organisation. We had to cut the number of people in the organisation. We did it in the most human way possible, but people still left. What that says to the people that stayed, well... they start to wobble a bit. The other thing is they feel very let down and hurt because this dream we were living wasn't a reality, and so there's this thing that says: I'll never trust an employer again. The trigger for this was not an intellectual belief in a new and brighter world. The trigger for it was pain... the pain from reality dawning".

From a career development perspective, the implications of this dramatic 'dawning of reality' were, essentially, three-fold. First, globally and regionally, there was a reduction in the number of permanent employees and an increase in contractors, as the company sought to create more flexibility in its staffing plan. This served to symbolise the end of the jobs for life culture in IBM, and paved the way for an emphasis on contribution (as opposed to loyalty and tenure). Second, there was a shift away from the institutionalisation of IBM 'corporate man' who stayed with the company for year upon year, largely by virtue of being 'a nice guy'. With this came a

⁶¹ Heller (1994:11) (non-attributed)

⁶² See Heller (1994:337).

recognition that there would need to be a fundamental review of the role of the much revered 'IBM manager'. Third, the company clearly recognised that, in a flatter organisational structure, hierarchical careers were no longer viable, and so it set about the implementation of the *Worldwide Professions* - professional communities sharing a common group of skills.

With regard to the role of managers, perhaps the most important change in IBM has been the demystifying of the role of the manager and even, perhaps, the removal of her/his status *per se*, as the following comments illustrate:

WILLIAM: In my early days the manager was by far the most important member of the team, the most significant person. But now it's not all about the manager; it's about the team itself, who happens to have a leader who is called a manager. Which is a far more sensible view to take: they're not a lord or a god; they're part of the team. And they should be a strong part of the team, but essentially that's what they are – part of the team. If you'd asked me about a year ago, I'd have said we had an autonomous culture, courses on empowerment, and the message was: find a niche and do it. At the same time, the company was being threatened with being broken down. It was a very different atmosphere. Now, it's a much more defined place for a manager, a management team. It's not just about passing down instructions from on high, and managing pay and rations. It's about leadership and trying to achieve a common goal, and teamwork. The manager of the team doesn't have to be the bright shiny person who's going far, they just have to be the person that can lead, to get the team together and focus the team on the objectives, and make sure they achieve them.

VIRGINIA: The management role is a very different one nowadays to what it used to be in IBM. Historically, the manager role used to be anything and everything. The manager used to be the *Sellotape*. Everything that didn't work - processes, systems - the manager knew what their people did, how they contributed. So, the manager used to be asked to provide a series of information that should have been available through many of our support systems, whereas in actual fact the manager should be managing the people in their group.

The above comments illustrate a shift in emphasis from a notion of the manager as a kind of omnipotent presence, toward a distinction between the manager as manager of tasks (projects), or manager of people (careers). This distinction was formalised in the early 1990s when IBM began moving toward a matrix management structure. Within this structure, 'career' managers were charged with responsibility for people on a day-to-day basis, and 'task' managers were responsible for delivery against business objectives. In principle, this seemed a logical move in order to develop a greater sense of managerial accountability, though as the following comments illustrate, that wasn't unanimously seen to be case:

PATRICK: The first change that really affected me was the change to matrix management. The first year or so I had a departmental manager who managed both my career and also the projects that we

were doing. I actually felt quite comfortable with that because I could see she had an interest in developing me personally. Matrix management doesn't give me the same feeling. They talked about it being career managers to start off with, but I think they've given up on that. It's back to unit managers, which doesn't give you the same idea that they're looking after your career. But matrix management also creates opportunities, because there are more managers. So there's a good side to it too.

FRED: You have a career manager, and it's down to you to manage your career with that manager, you know, basically sit down and plan your future, and if there's a project they want you to work on that doesn't fit your employee development plan then you don't necessarily have to go on it. However, if I'm needed then I'll be put there if the business needs it. Career managers agree with everything you say but they often don't work in the individual's best interests. They work in their own interests.

As a result of this differentiation, IBM was addressing one of its central career questions, namely how to create viable career structures in what was, by now, a much flatter organisation. This was particularly important given the need, historically, for people to become line managers (managers of people) at some point in their career if they wanted to reach the most senior levels in the organisation. Instead of one career path where, previously, even very technical people needed to have a spell in line management, this shift essentially created two career paths: a technical career path and a managerial career path, and thus with it a focus on project management skills and people management skills as two distinct competency clusters.

This principle was extended from late 1995 onward with the introduction of the *Worldwide Professions*. Following an extensive, global job size review, job families and broad-banded job roles were introduced. The Worldwide Professions, therefore, clustered these job families into professional communities which shared a common group of skills - e.g. sales, marketing, project management, and so on. By 1996, each community was covered by a worldwide level/band structure linked to global standards for skill, and track record of contribution, for each promotion step. Worldwide, European and UK business leaders were responsible for ensuring that these worldwide standards continued to reflect what the company's customers needed (into the future) and, in partnership with line managers, they were responsible for ensuring that individuals within each community met these standards consistently.

ALAN: You've probably heard about these worldwide professions. Their aim is to categorise every single employee into one of these professions, and in each profession you have a specialism, and within a specialism a level. So it's all very organised, and you can pull out route maps to plan your career, depending on what skills you have. What I don't know, along with most people, is how that will work out in practice. I suppose it's up to me to go find jobs that suit my skills. But you feel that if they want me to do this job here, because I have these skills, then that's what I'll do. I suppose it's positive. It shows the company is taking it seriously. And understanding the career planning process

will help me see how I can progress within my objectives, which is to progress where I can. So it will help me understand.

The introduction of the Worldwide Professions therefore provided the foundations for a repositioning of IBM's career proposition. It provided a greater degree of transparency in the career development process and made much more visible the criteria for progression (criteria which were common globally). It also led to a more open internal job market, with individuals being able to access, on line, opportunities around the globe. Third, the system created a degree of objectivity, since to be accepted into one of the professions, individuals had to submit self assessments of their skills and experiences which they believed qualified them for entry, and these were reviewed globally by certified 'Experts' in those professions. The system, thus, began to bring about a greater sense of personal ownership for career management, as well as partnership between employees and managers.

Thus, two key careers messages had a supporting rationale and infrastructure for people to understand: a) your continued employability in IBM, and thus progression, depends upon your level of skill and contribution, as defined by the Worldwide Professions; and b) you are personally responsible for your career development, and for navigating the various opportunities, though the company (i.e. managers) will provide support and opportunity.

And so a 'new' definition of a career in IBM began to take shape and be articulated. As one of the sponsors commented:

"The notion that says, you are now a junior programmer, and a junior programmer does this in perpetuity, and in two years' time we're going to develop you into a senior programmer, and you'll do this... gone. But, you can't... people need... if you want to go on a journey, you need a map. We have to produce some notion of a map and a career path even though what we're moving from is the points on the map are not jobs any more, they are standards, they are competencies we're moving between. This is the fundamental shift, which most people don't understand. There is nothing really written down which says: a career in IBM is... However, what we know a career in IBM will mean for people is that in order to be successful you have to have skills that the customer wants to buy. So, therefore, the only way you are actually going to obtain this notion of career is through the acquisition of skills. The customer's need for skills will actually drive careers".

Postscript

Since this research was conducted, IBM has seemingly 'bounced back' from the traumas of the early 1990s, although in 2000 it was not immune from the effects of the bursting dot.com bubble as its share price fell for the first time in eight years.

By 2000 IBM Corporation was achieving annual global revenues of \$88bn with net earnings of \$8bn, and employed a little over 316,000 staff worldwide (an increase of 25,000 staff in a little under two years)⁶³. And in 2001, IBM (UK) bolstered its graduate recruitment again, this time recruiting over 300 graduates⁶⁴.

Thus, at the shareholders' Annual General Meeting (24 April, 2001) Lou Gerstner reported strong performance in 2000 with record earnings and revenue, and an impressive \$4.44 earnings per share. In addition he reported investments of over \$13bn in R&D, capital expenditure and strategic acquisitions⁶⁵; an increased dividend (8%) *and* a strong cash position, and thus the buy back of \$6.7bn of common stock; and \$85bn in 'services backlog' (future revenues). Looking at what had driven this strong performance, Gerstner pointed to the boom in e-Business, and commented:

"This is very good for us because it creates demand for the things IBM does very well: powerful enterprise servers, serious database and transaction systems, large-scale storage systems, and of course, most of all, a broad array of technology services, from consulting and systems integration to hosting and outsourcing. So we have a wonderful alignment of market conditions, customer priorities and IBM's portfolio of businesses".

However, as Gerstner's closing remarks illustrate, the lessons of the early 1990s are still very much part of IBM senior management's consciousness:

"It's up to us to apply ourselves and apply the resources and capabilities of the one company that is ideally positioned and uniquely qualified to take advantage of this exceptional time in our industry and in our world. We know something about exceptional times. We faced one eight years ago when we stared down something that was quite unimaginable - the demise of IBM. We fought that war, and we won. Today, the agenda for IBM is dominated by this once in a lifetime opportunity to separate from the pack, to stand apart, and to lead".

ORGANISATION OF THE CASE STUDY CHAPTERS

As can be seen from the preceding sections, the Bank of England and IBM have, historically, shared a number of key features: jobs for life culture, deep managerial layers, hierarchically driven careers. However, as the comments above also illustrate - and the case study chapters develop more fully - each organisation has responded somewhat differently to the challenges of restructuring and downsizing which, in

⁶³ Source: IBM Corporation Annual Report (2000).

⁶⁴ Source: IBM (UK) Graduate Recruitment Website.

effect, have forced the redefinition of career philosophies and practices. This, then, has served to create a quite different organisational context in each and, thus, a very different discursive environment.

In the Bank, for example, it seems clear that (at the time of the research) very little had been done to build a new infrastructure and vocabulary around careers and, as such, people were struggling to release themselves from many of their seemingly deep-rooted assumptions about careers, development, progression and success. In IBM, however, it seems clearer that both a radically new infrastructure was being implemented (in the form of the Worldwide Professions) and a new way of speaking about careers was emerging (contribution, client-driven skills requirements, etc.). Thus, we begin to see somewhat different talk from the research subjects, and we hear of somewhat different responses to the 'dawning realities'.

Throughout the case study chapters the emphasis is on reporting this talk and, in so doing, illustrating the key themes which are presented as individuals go about the task of constructing their career stories. While this inevitably requires a degree of commentary, the wider analysis and discussion is dealt with more fully in Chapter 7. Presenting the data and analysis in this fashion allows the reader initially to be immersed in both the organisational and discursive context, and thus to appreciate the indexicality of subjects' career stories. Chapter 7 provides the opportunity to consider more fully the similarities and differences between the two case study organisations, the discourses which are operating in the texts and, thus, the key themes which speak to the essence of this thesis.

The passages of text are presented according to a number of broad themes which served to structure the interview schedules. As will be seen in Chapters 5 & 6, however, varying degrees of emphasis are placed on these themes, given the contextual specificity of the two organisations. The themes in question are as follows:

- career choices / what is a career / the difference between a career and a job
- expectations on entry, and changes in expectations over time
- organisational change and its implications for career policy and practice
- typical careers
- notions of success / what it takes to get on
- future career expectations

⁶⁵ For example, *Mainspring*, a leading e-Business consulting firm.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY (1)

THE BANK OF ENGLAND

INTRODUCTION

As outlined in Chapter 4, this chapter is designed as a presentation of extracts of the data from the main fieldwork in the Bank of England. Throughout the chapter, passages of subjects' actual talk is presented, and commentary offered as to its meaning and possible interpretation. The wider analysis and discussion of key themes (including comparative analysis of the case studies) is presented in Chapter 7.

As also outlined in Chapter 3, the twelve interviews from which the following transcripts have been generated took place between March and June 1996. In most cases, subjects were interviewed on two separate occasions⁶⁶, with a transcript being produced immediately following the first interview, thus allowing for a preliminary analysis of the data and the production of follow-up questions for the second interviews. However, the total body of interview materials has been treated, essentially, as one data set, and so the data in this chapter is not presented in a manner as to artificially separate that set. To ensure the reader has the appropriate context, however, in each case the researcher's questions are also presented.

In this chapter, the data are presented under seven headings which, taken together, chart the telling of subjects' career stories:

- Choices: jobs or career ?
- Early expectations
- Change in expectations over time
- Changes in the Bank (and implications)
- Typical careers, the rules of the game, success
- What could the Bank be doing differently ?
- The future

⁶⁶ In one case (Sally) a second interview was not possible in the timeframe necessary to complete the main part of the fieldwork in this organisation.

The following few passages serve to provide a contextual reference point for the coming chapter. That is, they provide an orientation to both the nature of subjects' talk, and some of the themes which will resonate through this chapter.

Thus, we hear first from Luke about the swing toward the primacy of economics while he was away on study leave in 1994, and his expressed view that this marked the point at which the career rules in the Bank changed. Second, we hear from Keith about a fundamental feature of the careers landscape in the Bank with his talk of people needing to 'do well'. Third, we see from Luke a not untypical response to organisational change, namely one of 'learned helplessness' or indeed 'denial' as he seeks out his "bucket of sand" in which to bury his head.

(Note: unlike the remainder of this chapter, these three extracts are presented without commentary, in order to allow the data to 'speak for itself').

I was doing rather well, but then they changed the rules !

SJA: Looking at the whole of your time in the Bank, how has your career evolved ?

LUKE: Well, I started in Banking Supervision. Started quite slowly to begin with, as all new jobs do. At that stage, my career was very much on a par with the other people I joined with. I had a lucky break when I went to work for one of the Directors, as his assistant. That exploded me from the world where I was a little part, to the top of the Bank. In 1990, I moved to GEMMD⁶⁷. Quite a few contemporaries left at that stage, but the Bank had looked after me. I was doing *very* well by Bank standards. This was at a time where progression was still a function of how many years you'd spent in the Bank, rather than the sort of contribution you were making. I had nothing to complain about; I felt very well looked after. But then I suppose this whole environment, which is the Bank, began to change. My memory is somewhat misty on these things, but the principle is this: when I joined, and for four or five years thereafter, the Bank recruited some specialist economists, but by far the bulk of its recruits were the famous generalists, like me, and that began to change quite noticeably in the early '90s where, you know, the emphasis began to shift very much toward the need for economists - not necessarily specialist economists everywhere, but the reasonable bulk had economic literacy. And a lot of people, like myself, began to feel quite nervous about these people coming in. The message that we were hearing was that the future lies in the hands of these people. What does that therefore begin to mean ? Well, among the non-economists there was a lot of unrest, and there was a period of about a year when the aim had been articulated, but they hadn't decided what they were going to do about it. I was fortunate enough to get a place at Birkbeck, as one of the sponsored people, to study economics. I suppose that was the most difficult decision I had to make. It seems a bit daft. You know, don't look a gift horse in the mouth, and paid for by your employer. I was going to come back with some economics, but I was never going to come back as a real economist, a specialist. I was taking a year out at a critical time in my career, so I chewed on that for a while, but eventually I thought it really

⁶⁷ Gilt Edge Money Markets Division.

would be quite short-sighted not to do it, and so I did it. So, around about early 1993 I had it in my mind that, done quite well, things had gone very well, thank you very much, I'm going off and I'm going to become an economist, and now I've come back and actually extended the range of my options. But while I was away of course they changed the rules. During that year that I was away, the Bank did the first of these big reviews that it does and, as part of that, International Divisions - where I was - was essentially axed. And, clearly, as part of this same process, there was a huge, well not huge... but in the Bank's terms, pretty significant - de-layer, and quite a few chunks of junior to middle management, quite a lot of those long standing managers were encouraged to take a severance package, more or less directly. So the animal I came back to at the Bank was really rather different to the one that I left, and certainly the options I perceived to be open to me were rather narrow. And, let's face it, the prospects for advancement changed somewhat, not dramatically, but they had certainly changed. I mean, if you look at all the Heads of Division across the Bank, they're all less than age forty, so you've got to question: well, what are they going to do in the next ten years, and what opportunities will there be for the rest of us ?

People need to 'do well' around here

SJA: I tend to think that sitting down and thinking about these sorts of things can be very helpful for some people.

KEITH: I can imagine. There are quite a lot of people in the Bank... in fact one of my old bosses used to complain that one of the things that used to drive him nuts about the Bank is that if you ask somebody what they wanted to achieve in the Bank, they'd say something like: well, "I want to be Official Zone 3 by the time I'm forty". And he used to despair, and say all they're interested in is the rank; they're not interested in what they're doing. So I think, in the Bank, a lot of people attach enormous importance to their career. And the Bank attracts people like that, who are very conscious of *doing well* in the context they're put in. It's an institutional thing. They won't necessarily question why they're doing what they're doing, but they'll want to do 'well'. They've done *well* in their school; they've done *well* in their university; they must achieve what's put in front of them. You get a lot of people like that.

I want to be an ostrich !

SJA: I wonder whether your thoughts about your career have changed in any way since we last spoke, or whether you've even thought about your career since we last spoke ?

LUKE: No. I thought it was so depressing, some of those questions, some of which I found very difficult to answer. I just sort of blotted it out, and went back and found my bucket of sand and stuck my head firmly in it.

As outlined earlier, the above passages have served to provide a general orientation to the nature of the data which is to be presented in this chapter, and to some of the key themes which run through subsequent passages of talk. In the following sections, we now turn to a variety of more detailed extracts of subject's talk around these themes.

CHOICES - JOBS OR CAREERS ?

In order to highlight subjects' basic assumptions about career and, indeed, to point up their understanding of the difference between career and job, a number of questions were posed early on in the interviews about vocational choices. The following passages illustrate typical responses.

I was really just looking for a job

SJA: At what point did you think about careers ?

JAMES: Around October in the final year, through the milkrounds. I certainly had no career plan, other than to be doing something in the City.

SJA: So, what sort of expectations did you have at that point ?

JAMES: I was really just looking for a job, so no predetermined path at that point, just something in London, and something in the City so I could vaguely use my degree.

As with later passages, we are not interested here in the literal answer to the question: "at what point did you think about careers ?" - in the context of a discussion about old and new deals assumptions, the answer is of no consequence at all. What *is* interesting here is the speaker's apparent assumptions about the difference between a career and a job. In his first turn of talk he tells us he had "no career plan". In the second turn he tells us: "I was really just looking for a job, so no predetermined path at that point". The implication is clear, namely that this speaker sees a job as being something of relatively short duration (which, incidentally, might be *unplanned*), while a career is something which evolves over a longer period - a path is trodden as one seeks to achieve the purpose of the plan.

Getting a good start

SJA: Towards the end of your time at university, what sort of career options did you consider ?

KEITH: When I was doing the degree, I knew absolutely nothing about the world of work. But by the time I did the PhD I became interested in finance, mainly because of the bull market in the eighties, and I wanted to find out what it was all about. My supervisor had lots of links in the City and whatever, and one of his links was in the Treasury, and he knew someone in the Treasury who wanted someone like me working for him, and so I went there. It seemed like a very good start to a career to go and join the Treasury.

In this passage Keith seems, like James, somewhat unconcerned about his longer term career. Instead, we are left with the feeling that he (like many graduates at this stage) is more concerned with simply getting a 'good start' to his career, and presumably

getting a few years 'under his belt' with a reputable institution. This theme is echoed by Luke below:

As good a place as any

SJA: At some point you would have begun to think about life after university. Talk me through that thought process.

LUKE: Well, like most linguists, I guess you entertain thoughts of using your language skills, and so my thought was to go off and become an interpreter... But as time went on, I started to see better linguists than me... although it was still an attractive career. So, that was my first leaning toward a career, or rather what to do next rather than a career. I was never someone who knew exactly what I wanted to do from day one. If you want to know why I took the Bank, well the money came into it a little bit: it was paying a wee bit better, but I also thought it offered a fairly broad range of things to do. And, I suppose, when I came down to interview I met some interesting and challenging people, and I suppose I thought, well, it's as good a place to start work as any.

SJA: When you'd narrowed down your options, and chosen the Bank, were you thinking in career terms, or was this a job ?

LUKE: It was wholly opportunistic. It was a start in something which offered the chance of a career, but at the same time was sufficiently broadly based to be used as a jumping-off platform to something else.

In the middle of this passage, Luke tells us he chose the Bank of England because it seemed "as good a place to start work as any". This seems likely to have been because he thought the environment would be as 'interesting and challenging' as the people he met during his interview. He goes on to tell us that "it was a start in something which offered the chance of a career" but at the same time was something which provided a "jumping-off platform to something else". Again, as with James and Keith, one gets the feeling that Luke is linking the notion of career to the principle of longevity; hence, a long term relationship or association. Thus, it is difficult for him to emphatically see the possibility of a career in his first organisational role since he does not seem to foresee he will be with his employer for a long period of time.

This passage is also interesting from another perspective. In his first turn of talk, Luke tells us he originally considered trying to make a career in linguistics (his degree subject). However, he also tells us that, as time went on, he started to see better linguists than himself and, as a result, seems to have decided not to pursue a career in linguistics. The phrase: "although it was still an attractive career" seems to be implying that he might have found the possibility of earning a living through linguistics interesting but, at the same time, the possibility of being in competition with '*better* linguists' might have meant he would not achieve the same degree of career success in the longer term. Thus, we are introduced here to a subtle dimension

of individuals' career assumptions, namely that a career is not just something you do over a long period of time, but rather it is also about the *relative* success you achieve in so doing. (This harks back to the earlier passage from Luke in which he clearly is thinking about how 'well' he has done relative to his peers). In this context, the phrase: "I was never someone who knew exactly what I wanted to do from day one" seems a little odd. Indeed, it seems at one level quite clear what he wanted to do, namely something which would allow him, relatively speaking, to 'do well'.

This theme of 'doing well' is further illustrated by Karen below:

I need to do well

SJA: During your time at university, at some point did you begin to think about careers, jobs, work ?

KAREN: Yes. I suppose I'd started thinking about it because I'd worked in the City, in my year off, and tried various things. But I have to admit, that was probably more for monetary reasons rather than career development. I started thinking about it in my second year, when all my friends in the year above were putting on their suits and going off for interviews and things. I think that's the point that really makes you think about it. I have to be honest, I didn't have a very good idea of what I wanted to do, but I think there is quite a lot of pressure on you if you're not going to, say, travel, or do a second degree. It's like following sheep; thou shalt go and get a job. And it forces you to think about what you might do.

SJA: Did you have any ideas at that time in terms of being driven by money or rising up the corporate ladder, all these sort of classic things ?

KAREN: Money no, not particularly, because I suppose any of the jobs I was going to do were reasonably well paid as graduate entrant type jobs. You know, it's not like going onto art school or perhaps into publishing which is quite low paid. So all the jobs I would do were fairly bog standard type pay. So money wasn't really an object. It wasn't, you know, I want to earn hundreds of thousands. It was, I need a job because of my bank manager. I think there was a pressure, you know, one is considered to be, you know... I'd done well at school, went to a good university, you know, very much my family, my friends... you were expected to go and have a good job, and I wanted to do well. And, there was that pressure. I don't think I had burning ambitions to be Governor of the Bank of England. But I *did* want to do well.

In the above passage we see echoes of the key points made previously, namely allusions to the difference between work (an exchange of labour for money) and careers (for the purposes of development); reference to peer group pressures; and personal and familial pressures to 'do well'. On this latter point, this passage is a particularly interesting example, and maps well to the comments offered by Keith in the opening to this chapter: "one is considered to be, you know... I'd done well at school, went to a good university... you were expected to go and have a good job, and I wanted to do well. I don't think I had burning ambitions to be Governor of the Bank of England. But I *did* want to do well."

EARLY EXPECTATIONS

Throughout the interviews, the subject of expectations invariably provided an interesting backcloth to people's assumptions about careers. In the following passages we again see evidence of the distinction between short term and long term perspectives (job/work versus career), as well as illustrations of the old deals discourse prevalent in the institution at the time of the research and immortalised in the icon of the 'forty year career'.

It was very much just a job

SJA: When you started at the Bank, were you thinking in terms of a job, just work, or were you thinking in career terms at that point in time ?

NAOMI: It was very much just a job I think. I haven't got a: I want to be here in, ten years' time. I was pretty convinced it had to be London to be a satisfying job.

SJA: Why was that ?

NAOMI: Uhm, I think partly the choice, and I suppose again it's this not being narrowed down on your options. I'm not sure I'd like it if there's isn't flexibility.

SJA: What sort of expectations did you have for the Bank ? What did you think it would be like ?

NAOMI: I think I saw it pretty much as civil service, uhm, fairly bureaucratic, but providing a reasonably secure environment in which to learn how to cope with work.

In this passage, Naomi is claiming that when she joined the Bank she did not have a long term career plan, but instead was more interested in simply doing a job which had variety, and thus gave her options. While we could take this at face value, it does at the same time seem to imply an assumption she is making about the nature of careers, namely that they are somehow linear in fashion, and thus 'narrow'. Her comment: "I didn't have a: I want to be here in ten years' time" expresses this linearity. The phrase serves to illustrate what she seems to interpret as the meaning of a career, namely that it is fundamentally about a destination job and a timescale. This is presumably how she sees a career as distinct from a job; that is, a job has no specific destination role, and no sense of evolving over time. We are left, however, with the question as to why she doesn't seem to want to think in 'career terms' (or to think long term). This is a key theme which recurs in others' talk later on, and to which we shall return. Finally, it is worth noting her stated preference for security, a classic old deal metaphor.

I'll only be here two years

SJA: What were you looking for from the Bank when you joined ?

JAMES: I really did have very few expectations. I was just looking for work. I had the expectation of leaving the Bank within a year, eighteen months. I probably thought I'd be there two years at the start, just enough to begin building a good CV. But beyond that, I didn't really know what I wanted to do.

SJA: In terms of money or status and so on, did you have any idea how much money you wanted to earn or how high up you wanted to go ?

JAMES: When I joined, no. In terms of salary progression, I wasn't really thinking like that because I wasn't seeing beyond two years. I guess the novelty of having money was enough to keep me interested in the job.

One possible explanation for individuals' stated preferences not to think in (long term) career terms is provided here by James. In the above passage, James tells us he was "just looking for work". He had "very few expectations". It is interesting to ponder what he means by the term "expectations": does he also imply 'prospects' and thus, by implication, is he drawing a distinction between a career (having prospects) and work (not having prospects) ?

I'm not a great career strategist

SJA: When you joined the Bank, what were your expectations ?

LUKE: When I came in, I didn't have a... I'm not a great career strategist, and I didn't have a plan to do my three years here and go off and do something else. I thought I'd have a look at it, see if I liked it, and then make up my mind further down the road. But certainly at the time, quite a lot of emphasis was put on the prospects in the Bank, and the fact that, if people wanted it, and were reasonably able, they could have this long term career. And at the time, that was noticeably different from the big, bad private sector. At that time, I suppose the trade off between the public and private sector, between money and security, was quite marked.

SJA: Did you have any expectations of a long term career in the Bank ?

LUKE: I suppose by about 1988/89 I'd probably worked out that I was as good as anyone who joined the Bank at the same time as I did, you know, just looking round and looking at the competition. I didn't feel in any way threatened by the competition. And I suppose, yeah, thought that if things continued to go well, uhm, that I could certainly, with the career structure the way that it was, I mean certainly I was thinking in terms of getting to Senior Official, which is the level just below where the Directors kick in. And those were the sort of messages I would get back from the career people. So, yeah, late 1980s, I thought: like the work, like the people, and they seem to like me, uhm, I could probably go outside and raise my salary, depending on what I did, quite substantially. But on the other hand, life was really quite bearable in the Bank and, as I say, the intellectual challenge, I thought it was terrific. So, at that stage I became much firmer in the view that the Bank was the place for me.

In this passage it seems we are again being seduced into thinking Luke had no expectations on entry to employment. As he claims: "I'm not a great career strategist,

and I didn't have a plan to do my three years here and go off and do something else". On the face of it, Luke's subsequent explanation seems plausible. What he seems to be doing (much like James) is interpreting the term expectations as synonymous with prospects and thus, since he apparently does not see himself in the Bank for the long term, he was not expecting to achieve any great career success.

However, as his second turn of talk begins to show, over time (c. three years after joining the Bank) his expectations changed somewhat as he began to look around at the competition: "I didn't feel in any way threatened". As a result, he claims: "I became much firmer in the view that the Bank was the place for me". This is an interesting theme. In short, it seems that - in the Bank of England at least - *part* of the explanation for individuals' claims to no expectations on entry to employment may also be a reflection of the fact that, at that stage, they would not have been able to 'suss out' the competition and thus set realistic, relative career progression expectations. Thus, what is again interesting here is what appears to be a very well embedded assumption about success under the terms of the old deal - career success in the Bank is about *relative* progression - (i.e. 'doing well' in a particular context).

It is also interesting to note that the question posed to Luke in the second turn of talk is really about time, not about destination. As a result, we might legitimately wonder why he is speaking in terms of destination rank. As Keith's comments in the opening section illustrate, there is clearly something fundamental in the culture of the Bank about 'doing well'. There is also clearly a competitive element here. As a result, it seems speakers are saying: how well I ultimately think I'll do depends primarily on how I see myself versus others. (It also seems to be dependent on how far 'the Bank' sees the individual going, as we shall see later).

By contrast, not all subjects talked about early career expectations in the context of progression or relative success versus peers. Others, like Sally (below), make clear reference to somewhat different aspects of the old deal. In the following passage Sally is indicating a preference for a paternalistic institution, one she assumes to be similar to that which her parents experienced in the forces. What is interesting here is her final comment, and the way in which she emphasises the relational nature of the old deal: commitment and/or compliance on the part of the employee in return for care on the part of the employer.

Comply and they'll look after you

SJA: When you got the offer from the Bank, what were your expectations ?

SALLY: I'm not sure I had any expectations. The impression I got from the literature I received was that it was a fairly paternalistic organisation. And certainly from the careers both of my parents have had, both having forces in their background, I think that was the sort of thing I was looking for.

SJA: Institutional ?

SALLY: Yes, a job for life, and they'll look after you. If you do what you're supposed to, in return they'll take care of you.

This theme of security and care in return for commitment is alluded to again, very powerfully, by Lucy below: "I expected to be employed and not fired" !

Safe and secure: measured optimism

SJA: When you first came to the Bank, what expectations did you have for your career ?

LUCY: Starting at the bottom end I expected to be employed and not to be fired. I expected it to be difficult and competitive, which it is. I don't think I looked very far ahead.

SJA: Did you have a particular view on how far you may go in the organisation, or how far up the career ladder so to speak ?

LUCY: I didn't assume I would become Governor, but I didn't assume that I would never get promoted. I think I thought sixty per cent up.

Lucy's second turn of talk, however, is more interesting still, given its reference to themes outlined earlier about progression and, indeed, about individuals' apparent reluctance to specify too quickly how 'well' they might do in the Bank. First, it is interesting to note that Lucy (like others) does not claim to have been interested in the 'top job'. However, she clearly assumed that part of the deal was that tenure brought with it promotion: "I didn't assume that I would never get promoted".

Her next comment, however, is curious: "I think I thought sixty per cent up". Clearly, Lucy believes that the deal in the Bank would mean a series of promotions over time. However, she seems to be implying that her likely rate of progression would be somewhat tempered due to reorganisation and delayering. The reference to "sixty per cent up" is not (as we will see in Chapter 6) evidence that she is beginning to think of her career in 'new deal' terms: this is not a reference to the fact that forty percent of her career may involve backward or sideward movement over time. It seems, instead, to be a reference to the frequency of promotions. Thus, she is alluding to the possibility of a somewhat flatter career trajectory than she might have envisaged on entry to the Bank.

The forty year career

SJA: Casting your mind back to when you first joined the Bank, what expectations did you have for your career ?

GILES: Uhm, I expected to stay at the Bank, if it worked out, for the forty year career, because I'm quite an institutional person. I liked school and I liked college, and from the earliest days I could see I was going to like the Bank. And, there would seem to be quite a wide variety of jobs I'd be able to do, although I would never be a specialist economist, mathematician or computer person, there were enough interesting jobs around. 'Interesting' is a word I seem to have used a lot ! Uhm, that has been a dominant uhm, sort of, theme throughout, just trying to find something that would keep me interested. And that means change, and indeed upwards movement over time, just because it won't stay interesting if you're doing the same job, or indeed over time at the same rank.

In the above passage we see two key things. First, we see an explicit reference to the much vaunted 'forty year career' - the metaphorical equivalent, perhaps, of the 'job for life' promised under the terms of the old deal. In this passage, Giles is providing persuasive evidence that he is something of an institutional person and thus, so long as there is sufficient variety to keep him 'interested', he is likely to enjoy being at the Bank, and indeed stay for a long time.

However, while we get a strong sense that what is driving Giles' interest in the Bank is the opportunity to do a variety of things under one roof, it seems clear this would not be entirely satisfying for him. His final comments serve to reinforce, again, the importance not simply of having an interesting long term vocation (literally, a job for life), but fundamentally a career which embodies "upwards movement over time" and, thus, increases in rank. He seems keen, however, not to portray that this is a key driver for him with the qualification that, without such hierarchical progression, it simply wouldn't be 'interesting'.

I want to do something interesting - but you can also call me Boss !

SJA: When you joined the Bank, did you have a strong idea of what a career meant ?

KEITH: I've never had a strong view of what a career is. I've just kind of... I like to do something I'm interested in, and I like to hopefully, you know, get more senior, more influential in that field. And, uhm, what I was interested in at the time was going more toward finance. Once I'm in that, I'd hope to get more knowledge, and as I get more knowledge people are going to give me more freedom and more responsibility, and a say in things.

SJA: Does freedom, responsibility, influence etc. necessarily mean hierarchical movement, upwards ?

KEITH: Well, I don't care what you call it. If you've got influence, you're up the hierarchy aren't you ? If you have influence, they may as well call you the boss.

In the previous passage, Keith is also suggesting that, essentially, he simply wants to be doing something which interests him. Beyond that, he claims, he has "no strong view of what a career is". His final comments, therefore, are curious, since he clearly *does* have some idea of what a career means to him: it means influence, and influence is synonymous with position in the hierarchy. Thus, like Giles, his claims to 'mere interest' seem hollow without the concomitant benefit of hierarchical progression.

The previous examples illustrate some of the enduring features of the old deal in the Bank and, indeed, the potency of the competitive careers landscape which characterises the Bank. These themes are perfectly embodied in the following passage:

I want a clear route through: I hate the idea of getting stuck

SJA: What expectations did you have when you came to the Bank ? What were you looking for ?

KAREN: I think I wanted to go to a firm where I would have a long term career with them which would, I mean, I suppose financial reward comes into it, but not above all else. And I wanted a firm which I could see a clear way through, not necessarily to rise to the very top but certainly to move forward. I hated the idea of getting stuck

SJA: You said you wanted to have a long term career, and to do well. What did you mean by that ?

KAREN: When I say: do well, it's all relative. I have to feel happy in myself. I want to feel that I'm moving forward, that I'm showing myself to the best of my ability. Now, other people's best of their ability might mean their ultimate ambition is to become chairman of ICI. I'm not saying that's mine, but I want to know that I'm constantly making progress, moving forward and not just going sideways, essentially doing the same job for the rest of my life. That's not what I want.

SJA: Are you fiercely ambitious ?

KAREN: Fiercely is the wrong word. Ambitious yes. There are other things. I'd quite like to have a family, and I'd like to work abroad, and that might involve taking a sideways step, and I'd accept that.

SJA: You suggested you hated the idea of getting stuck. What's getting stuck about for you ?

KAREN: Going sideways. Not progressing, in my terms. I think it really is the fear of going sideways, and not getting any more out of something. If you don't push yourself harder, push out the boundaries of your ability, then in some ways it starts becoming recessive.

As illustrated earlier, Karen (like Luke) seems particularly keen to do well. As in others' talk, there are references to the notion of a career evolving over the long term and, for the first time in the passages illustrated thus far, we hear of the importance of money. However, the more interesting phrase in the first turn of talk is: "I wanted a firm which I could see a clear way through, not necessarily to rise to the very top but certainly to move forward". This is a very powerful example of the progression-oriented mindset of many of the people hired by the Bank - (and thus might also say something about the image in which the institution recruits). It is also indicative of

the careers culture in the Bank: not everyone will be expected to 'rise to the top' but the expectation clearly is one of progressing, rising, moving up/forward. A discourse of 'betterment', therefore, clearly imbues subjects' talk, and is a distinctive feature of the old deals vocabulary of the Bank.

CHANGE IN EXPECTATIONS OVER TIME

Thus far we have seen compelling illustrations of the basic tenets of the old deal in the Bank, namely that a career is about progression over time, and one's relative success (rate of progression) versus others. We also see (e.g. Luke, Sally) talk of the relational nature of the old deal, namely how the Bank 'looked after' individuals in return for loyalty and effort.

When we look at how expectations are reported to have changed over time, we begin to see individuals trying to make sense of the (apparently changing) rules of the career game; the specific importance of peer group comparison; and, in some cases, talk of 'increases' in expectations, and in others, a sense of reality check. We also begin to see, in a few cases, the gradual emergence of a new vocabulary which alludes, *perhaps*, to the terms of a new deal.

The Oxbridge/Foreign Office skillset is not enough anymore

SJA: Over time, did your expectations change after a few months, few years in the Bank ?

IAN: I think the key change has been the realisation that those generalist, if you like Foreign Office type of Oxbridge type skills, are no longer adequate. You have to acquire specific skills. You *have* to have technical skills now, if you want to get on in the new Bank.

In this passage, Ian is telling us how he began to observe a change in the nature of the skills required in the Bank in order to secure career progression; namely, the old generalist skills. This is a reference to the demise of the once dominant concept of the 'all round central banker' and the emergence of the primacy of economic specialism. It is interesting to note the allusion to a time when such skills would have been prized not only at the Bank, but also by other veritable institutions like the Foreign Office. Now, however, as Ian proposes, such skills are no longer an "adequate" prerequisite for success: to get on, "you *have* to have technical skills".

I've learned to play the game: perception counts

SJA: To what extent have your career expectations changed over time ?

KEITH: Well, I suppose what I learned in the Bank is that you have to play the game. It's less achievement that matters than how people perceive you. And, certainly in the Bank, perception counts for a hell of a lot. Technical prowess in particular counts for a hell of a lot. I used to spend my time telling people that what I was working on was not that complex, and it would be easy to explain it to them, but I found that somehow downgraded some people's opinions of what I was doing. They'd think, well if it's that easy to explain, then maybe he's not that technical after all. So now I keep my mouth shut, and they think I'm some sort of rocket scientist, and I've found *that* takes you on much further in your career than doing something valuable.

In the above example we see what appears to be evidence of Keith coming to terms with an enduring feature of the Bank's culture, namely the importance of impression management - and, in particular, the importance of creating the impression of technical prowess. As Keith says: "it's less achievement that matters than how people perceive you. And, certainly in the Bank, perception counts for a hell of a lot. Technical prowess in particular counts for a hell of a lot". Over time, the conclusion Keith has come to is that it is better to appear to be something you're not ("some sort of rocket scientist") - "*that* takes you on much further in your career than doing something valuable".

Over time, you get a better idea of where you stand

SJA: You mentioned that when you first came to the Bank you had no real sort of long term clear strategy. Did your expectations change as time moved on ?

NAOMI: I think they do because you come in just not knowing where you stand in any sort of peer group terms. You don't know what the Bank is actually looking for really. I mean, particularly when I joined the place, I mean it was a straight Milkround interview plus a final interview. There was none of this Selection Centre testing. So you got no real idea as to where you rated in Bank terms when you came in, but it didn't take long to realise that I was doing reasonably well, uhm, at which point I think you do start to think longer term, and a bit more strategic career planning comes into it.

In this passage, Naomi seems to be supporting the view implied by Keith that when individuals come into the Bank they have no idea what the organisation is looking for. Instead, this is something which becomes more apparent over time. However, of particular importance in this passage is Naomi's comment about the need for a peer group reference point. She seems to be saying that it was difficult to arrive at any clear expectation of her longer term prospects since she did not have a clear view of how well she compared to others. However, over time she reports: "it didn't take long

to realise that I was doing reasonably well". Having realised this, she says: "you do start to think longer term, and a bit more strategic planning comes into it".

I felt a lot more confident when I had some evidence I was actually quite good

SJA: Over time did your expectations change ? Did your views toward the Bank change ?

LUCY: Yes. Initially, because I was the only graduate entrant graduate in the area I worked in, and I worked with a lot of experienced people. I felt I wasn't doing as good a job as they were, which was true, but because I didn't have anyone to compare with myself with I found it difficult to judge. That was also true when I went to the dealing room to a large extent where dealing skills were more important than any other skills. So I guess it would only be when I moved into International Division where I was able to make a kind of direct comparison of what I would consider to be my peers, at which point I felt a lot more confident because I had some evidence that I was quite good. The longer I stayed in International Divisions the more that confirmed myself in my estimation as being not the top stream but the next group down, and the advantage I had over some of the people in the top stream was being incredibly versatile.

SJA: When you went through this period of, self affirmation I suppose is one way of putting it, did your planning horizons change ?

LUCY: Certainly. I suppose the conclusion I drew was that if I was any good at the job I was doing I'd like to do my boss' job and... no reason to assume that I couldn't do my boss' boss' job. Therefore it's only a matter of time. One has to get the right experience, and you have to be lucky with promotion... all those usual caveats. I thought if I get the right experience there's no reason I can't do that, and I suppose that all takes well... years, rather than a couple of weeks.

Here, Lucy seems to be supporting the point made by Naomi that expectations change over time as a function of becoming more familiar with one's peer group, thus allowing the development of a more realistic view of one's prospects - as the only new entrant graduate in the area "I didn't have anyone to compare myself with... I found it difficult to judge". Later, in International Divisions, she reports she found it easier to compare herself with others, and felt more confident that she was "quite good".

It is interesting that, having made this self-assessment, Lucy describes herself as being "not the top stream but the next group down". In so doing we might argue she is establishing in her mind a very powerful image of her likely future career trajectory and, having established this, is able to set a clear career objective. However, her subsequent comment - "and the advantage I had over some of the people in the top stream was being incredibly versatile" - implies that even if she sees herself in the 'second' group, she still sees herself being able to compete with the top group. In a sense, the career expectation she is setting up is perhaps not her ultimate ceiling but the minimum she might expect to achieve. (We *could* argue this is precisely what we would expect in the Bank given the clearly competitive careers culture).

As Lucy goes on to report, her increasing confidence meant she developed a clear idea of what her career in the Bank might look like, namely doing her boss' job, or even her boss' boss' job. Thus, we see here a clearly hierarchical dimension to Lucy's conception of her likely future career which is common with other passages earlier in this chapter. We also see again the assumption that this will evolve over time: "I suppose that all takes well... years, rather than a couple of weeks".

My expectations have steadily got higher

SJA: Did your expectations change over time ?

MARIE: I'm sure they did because I had virtually no expectations when I came in. I didn't know what to expect. I think my expectations have just steadily got higher as time has gone by. I know the institution much better now, so I'm aware of what's possible, and you know you see other people doing quite well and you think: oh, that looks interesting. And you see there doesn't have to be one career route. I mean, by dint of doing various jobs, I'm now clearer about what I want from the Bank and the Bank's ability to deliver that.

In the previous example we saw how Lucy began to set some ambitious, albeit tempered expectations about her likely future career trajectory. In the example above, we see a similar dynamic as Marie first reports having "virtually no expectations when I came in" before going on to claim that "my expectations have just steadily got higher as time has gone by". The key word here perhaps is "higher" - i.e. not 'more realistic' necessarily. In other words, even if Marie feels her expectations to have become more realistic over time, it seems clear she is expecting a degree of hierarchical progression.

As I've got older, my expectations have increased - I've got more ambitious

SJA: As time moved on, did your early expectations clarify, or change, at particular points in time ?

JEMIMA: I can remember sort of thinking: oh I can see myself working there later on or there later on. So, that very much clarified the main reason for me joining, the variety. Not surprisingly, as I've got older, my career expectations have certainly got more focused and have increased. You know, I didn't join the Bank thinking I want to get to that specific point or that specific point, but I think as I've got older, well I think two things. One is of course I know much more about the Bank, so I can see where I'm aiming for, you know, I can sort of see what jobs I might quite like to do. And also I think I've got more ambitious as I've realised I can actually do quite a lot of things. I think before I tested that I hadn't really thought where I really wanted to get to, but I think as I've done the wide variety of jobs, and realised I'd been successful at them, I wanted to sort of build on that. So I think I've probably got more ambitious as I've got older.

SJA: You said that, as you got older, your expectations have become more focused and increased. What did you mean by that ?

JEMIMA: Well, I think that when I was 24, 25 I didn't really think about where I was going to get to in the Bank. I mean, I didn't really think long term at all about anything - not just work; anything. Whereas I think now, you know I'm conscious about where I am now, and how that will project into where I'm going to go in my career. I just think you think longer term as you get older, and you have to put the building blocks in place so when you get to 40, 50, 60 you're where you want to be. When you start you don't know how good you're going to be. You don't know whether it's going to be the pay cheque that gets you out of bed in the morning or interest in the job, or because it's sort of an investment in future opportunities. You just go in every day.

In the early part of this passage, Jemima reports that, as she has got older, her career expectations have "certainly got more focused and have increased". As with Naomi, Lucy and Marie before, she claims this is a function of getting to know what is possible in the Bank as well as a greater awareness of her capabilities.

However, a particularly interesting comment appears in the second turn, namely: "I'm conscious about where I am now, and how that will project into where I'm going to go". This comment is interesting for three reasons. First, the particular turn of phrase "I'm conscious about where I am now" seems not simply to be an acknowledgement of her hierarchical position relative to her peer group, but more specifically a reference to the position she occupies in the overall career opportunity structure. Second, as a result, she seems indeed conscious that this position (perhaps a function of a strong track record to date) implies a certain trajectory as she projects into the future. Third, we could also argue that Jemima has a degree of certainty about where her career *is* "going to go" (notably not *might* go, as in many previous examples).

Finally, her reference to putting the building blocks in place, as she approaches 40, 50, 60, seems an obvious indication that, with the passage of time, she has come to see her career developing in clear (hierarchical) steps. Why ? - because "when you start you don't know how good you're going to be". (Jemima clearly regards herself as "good").

In the above passages we have seen claims that, over time, individuals gain a more realistic understanding of the institution around them and, thus, a clearer perspective on what they might reasonably expect to achieve in career terms. For others, it is perhaps arguable that the passage of time provides such clarity.

I can still get a forty year career - nothing much will change

SJA: Have any of those expectations changed at all; indeed, did they change over time in any way ?

GILES: Uhm, I still would hope to be at the Bank for a forty year career. Whether I use the word expect now I'm not quite sure, because I think it's very possible that supervision and surveillance will be floated off from the Bank to a separate regulatory agency at some point in the next ten, fifteen years, depending on when the next banking crisis is or the views of the incoming government or whatever. And that will create a real decision time because there seem to be fewer and fewer jobs which a generalist - amateur is another way of putting it - can actually do, uhm, because the specialist economists have taken over more, which is probably a good thing in terms of the nation but it's not necessarily a good thing in terms of my career.

In this example, Giles is articulating a preference to continue building a 'forty year career'. His use of the word "hope" rather than "expect" seems to imply that he has noted and is accommodating the messages being conveyed in the Bank at this time about the 'new' principles which will determine careers. However, his subsequent comments suggest that, at the time of this interview, he was wholly out of touch with the reality of the impending changes in the Bank. For example, it is interesting to note that Supervision & Surveillance Division did not enjoy a ten or fifteen year hiatus, rather it was devolved from the Bank a little more than one year after this interview. Thus, in reality, the career decision point for Giles never came since, like many, his future career was decided for him as he was swept along with the changes. This example thus suggests another interesting feature of the apparent predisposition of many of the research subjects, namely that there is no need for strategic planning because time will resolve the lack of clarity - an interesting paradox which, in the event, for Giles might not have been "a good thing" in terms of his career.

They've changed the rules - and I'm paying the price

SJA: Did your expectations change over time ?

SALLY: Well, initially I had this idea that being a Manager meant you had succeeded, that you'd reached a certain level. Partly parental expectations. They wanted us to be in professional jobs. Which was another reason for opting for the Bank, because it seemed like a reasonably secure culture. That view started changing about five years ago. The Bank's now a lot less paternalistic than it was, and it expects a lot more of its Managers now than it did. I looked around at the Managers and thought: if that's the price it takes to get there then quite frankly I'm not interested in getting there. I don't want to work a fifty hour week. I do have a life outside the Bank. So I think I look at things more as a job now than a career, a job that provides me with sufficient salary which enables me to do the things I want to do the rest of the time. I want to have a secure pension so I don't have to worry about my old age. I think to some extent maybe I'm less committed to the Bank than I was, but I wouldn't say it was my fault. I think the Bank has changed. It's changed the rules; it's not the organisation I joined.

In this passage, Sally is alluding to one of the classic components of the old deal, namely that one's real or apparent success was/is linked strongly to position in the hierarchy. Thus: "I had this idea that being a Manager⁶⁸ meant you had succeeded, that you'd reached a certain level". Sally's comments seem to suggest she originally wanted to be a Manager (to achieve a degree of career success). However, over time, she claims to have witnessed a change in the implicit contract between the Bank and individuals in terms of what is required of its Managers. Unlike many of her peers, therefore, it appears that Sally's career aspirations (or expectations) have not increased at all, rather they have decreased somewhat dramatically: "I think I look at things more as a job now than a career".

Sally's comments seem to mark the transition in the Bank from the old to the new deal. She talks about the Bank being "a lot less paternalistic than it was" and of the Bank expecting "a lot more of its Managers than it did". Is this evidence of a shift from the old deal notion of 'hang around, do well and you'll get promoted' to 'we want a contribution' ? It is difficult to say, but Sally's final comment is certainly persuasive: "the Bank has changed. It's changed the rules; it's not the organisation I joined".

As with the example from Sally above, it would be dangerous to conclude at this stage that we have sufficient evidence to indicate clearly the transition in the Bank from an old deal to a new deal, much less that we have evidence of individuals appropriating a new vocabulary. However, as the following passage demonstrates, there are aspects of Luke's talk which suggest that at least a different vocabulary was beginning to emerge, if not yet be understood. As such, we might tentatively suggest this at least is an example of someone struggling to come to terms with the new environment: "career... yeah, career aspirations... There is no... How do I best articulate this ?"

Manage your own career: great concept, but how do you do that ?

SJA: Have your expectations changed over time as we come nearer to the present day ?

LUKE: What *has* changed, and changed quite markedly in the last year, two years, I suppose... career... yeah, career aspirations... There is no... How do I best articulate this ? I mean... in the Bank in the late 1980s, it was fairly clear you had two routes. You could either zip up quite quickly, as people like me were doing at the time. By and large, progress would be uninterrupted for quite some time. Salary would tick up, and you were working very hard, but security, by and large, was intact. I mean, you could look up and see there was always a home for you somewhere, wherever it was on the scale. But looking up there now, it's much harder to see, well, where's the place for me up there ? And,

⁶⁸ Note that the distinction 'Manager' in the Bank of England is an explicit designation of rank and not necessarily a reference to the nature of the role one might occupy - e.g. managing people.

I think that's true for me, and it's true for everyone. Where's the place, and what happens if I don't get there, because in the old world, you could just sit there ticking over. Now, there's a huge question mark. You know, people like me are a fairly costly overhead, and I think no-one should be in any doubt that if you can't justify your keep, over four or five years, then the Bank has to be fairly frank about the messages it gives out. I mean, you might find that statement justifiably laughable, because what's happened to us now is what's been happening in the private sector for at least the last five years. So, we've been lucky, and we're only now having to face these tough decisions. So, the outlook is uncertain, and the Bank's been very clear that the good old bad old days, a bit like a communist country or centrally planned economy, where staff were managed centrally and had a career plan, and had a chat with the Personnel Director, and talk about the things you would do in the future, get your experience... Now, the emphasis is on the individual to plan his or her career. There are some pluses to that, but at the same time it's also a bit of a sea change from what we've been used to in the past, so we're all having to get in touch with what it means to take responsibility for your own career. It's a great concept, but actually how do you do that ? What influence do you have over your choices ? So, yeah, a great deal of uncertainty. I think if I weren't quite so busy, I'd be worrying about it a little more. The amount of things I have to do is giving me a great excuse not to get into this in great detail.

As Luke describes, previously the old deal allowed individuals to "zip up [the hierarchy] quickly... progress would be uninterrupted... salary would tick up, and...security, by and large, was intact - you could look up and see there was always a home for you somewhere". Now, however, it seems more difficult to identify how he can progress in hitherto typical terms: "well, where's the place for me up there ?".

One of Luke's next comments is particularly revealing, and serves to reinforce one of the key themes outlined earlier in this chapter. He says: "what happens if I don't get there... in the old world, you could just sit there ticking over. Now there's a huge question mark". In previous sections we have seen that a particular feature of the Bank of England is its intense competitive environment. As such, it follows that most people have a notion of career which is defined by destination rank or position in the hierarchy, as well as a concept of relative success versus peers. In other words, the secret to success is continuous hierarchical progression. In this passage, it also seems from Luke's perspective that continuous hierarchical progression is, literally, the prerequisite for survival. In many organisations (especially those which espouse the values of 'lateral careers') we would expect to find an acceptance of the value of individuals who can continue to contribute to the organisation at a single level. Here, however, we seem to be hearing that, in the Bank, you are of little or no value unless you keep 'zipping up' !

In this passage we also hear talk of the old and new 'regime', almost quite literally given Luke's use of the metaphor of a communist country or centrally planned economy. Under this "good old bad old days" system, it seems clear Luke saw

individuals' careers being managed for them. "Now" he tells us "the emphasis is on the individual to plan his or her career". As he remarks, this is something of a sea change, and as a result, in a beautiful turn of phrase Luke tells us that "we're all having to 'get in touch' with what it means". This, perhaps more than any previous example, is the best illustration of the transitory climate in the Bank at the time of the research: literally the point in time where we are passing from old to new deal, and thus witnessing the juxtaposition in subjects' talk of old deal and new deal metaphors.

CHANGES IN THE BANK (AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS)

In previous passages we have seen subjects report that their career expectations changed over time as they began to appreciate where they stood in relation to what they saw as 'the competition', and as they began to understand the nature of the careers landscape or career opportunity structure. With this increasing clarity, it seems came, for many, a more potent sense of career prospects, and with it a greater sense of attachment to the notion of a career as something which evolves over time.

As the following passages illustrate, these themes are brought more sharply into focus as individuals begin to see and, to some extent, 'struggle' to make sense of organisational change and its impact on the careers landscape. One particularly interesting feature is that individuals see these changes *very* differently and, as a result, appear to be responding quite differently.

There were winners and losers - and I'm a big winner !

SJA: Thinking about changes in the Bank over the last couple of years, how would you summarise the changes in the structure and culture ?

HUGH: The whole delayering type process we've had and restructuring process seems to me there is... The good jobs are better than they were before. I see less good jobs around though... So there's this problem, in terms of the delayering process, and the restructuring just meant there seems to be less really attractive jobs. And I think that's another reason why you think: well, you know, I'll stick around while I get good, interesting jobs but, you know... And also, consistent with that, there has been this move away from forty year careers to short term careers. I'm more than happy with that. I think forty year careers were an odd thing... loads of bad people in the wrong jobs, so I'm more than happy with that. But it does affect the way you think about your career.

SJA: How have you reacted to this. It sounds as if you're quite positive ?

HUGH: Oh, I mean, there were winners and losers from the change, and I was a big winner. So, change has been good for me. I mean, essentially, economics is a lot more important, and therefore the people who can do economics suddenly become far more important. So, what happened was before... to get the managerial jobs and stuff like that you had to timeserve and you had to do a tour and go

work in other places in the Bank to be this rounded central banker type. Then suddenly they said: well, it doesn't matter, you know. We've got those people, good bloke, but they can't do economics. They may have been able to do economics five years ago but they've spent the last five years supervising banks to become a rounded central banker. And that's a really tough blow for those guys because they were economists, and they made this rational decision to de-skill, as a way of getting on and then suddenly the rules changed. Uhm, but for me, suddenly uhm, I was perfectly positioned because I'd got to a senior level within the economists cohort.

SJA: Does that give you a certain sense of security ?

HUGH: No, because I mean flavour of the month this time. No. I mean, it will go back to generalists at some point. And suddenly they say well crums, you got to that position *miles* too quick, you're gonna have to stand still for ten years.

In this passage we gain the impression that Hugh is someone who sees himself as very competent but perhaps hitherto held back by the tenure-based ("timeserve") rules of the old deal in which, to get on, you had to "do a tour". He therefore reports being very happy with the demise of the forty year career: "I think forty year careers were an odd thing... loads of bad people in the wrong jobs". He also reports being happy with the consequences of layering and restructuring, largely because he has been lucky enough to secure one of the "good jobs". More specifically, by virtue of his background in economics, he finds he has "suddenly become far more important". If there are winners and losers in the wake of the demise of the old deal, it is clear Hugh sees himself as one of the winners.

Hugh's later comments are also very interesting, as he provides for us an account of the "rational" de-skilling process of some former economists, presumably in an environment where the 'all round central banker' concept was thriving - before the pendulum swing toward economic specialism. He reports that some individuals actively took the decision to de-skill in order to enhance career prospects, and thus the change in the career rules was a "tough blow for those guys". If this is accurate, we are provided here with important evidence about the characteristics of the careers culture in the Bank - first, that individuals seem rather short-term focused, and concerned more to maintain hierarchical progression than, in a sense, to maximise their long term human capital through the development of deep technical or specialist skills; second, an over-reliance, perhaps, on the centrally planned approach to career management alluded to earlier by Luke, and thus a predisposition to make important career decisions based simply on the Bank's view (rather than the individual's view) of what might be important; and third, a degree of serendipity. This last point is illustrated well by Hugh's comment: "I was perfectly positioned" - we don't get the feeling this was the result of a deliberate, strategic decision on his part, more of being 'in the right place at the right time'.

Hugh's final comment indicates someone who appears to be in tune with likely future events, given his speculation that "it will go back to generalists at some point". When this happens, his continued progress might be halted if anyone questions the pace at which he has scaled the managerial hierarchy in the meantime. If, as he suggests, "they" come to the view he has achieved a certain status too quickly, then he would "have to stand still for ten years" and, thus, his career would (temporarily at least) grind to a halt. Hugh's attitude in the meantime seems to be: I've been dealt a lucky hand; I may as well make hay while the sun shines !

I hear mixed messages - did someone change the rules ?

SJA: If we look back over the last couple of years, there have been, I guess, some not insignificant changes in the Bank. From your point of view, how would you summarise those changes ?

NAOMI: I think the most significant thing, particularly in career planning terms, is the split into two wings. You're in a position where personnel is actually managed separately in the two wings, so I now have to talk to a personnel manager who doesn't know me, in a different wing. You start getting to the point where people will veto cross-wing moves because they won't want to lose their good people, so there's a whole structural problem they have at the moment. They've done this operational split to focus on the core purposes of the Bank, but it's actually restricting movement and opportunities for people who *do* still want Bank-wide development.

SJA: So how have these sorts of changes impacted you ?

NAOMI: I've worked entirely in one half of the Bank... and you get very mixed messages as to whether that's a valid thing to do or whether to be a good all round central banker you need to move around. And that builds a certain amount of resentment about the absence of any coherent overall policy. There's very little guidance anymore. If they could at least tell you which areas would give you certain sorts of experience, which areas would give you that profile, the sort of things if you like if you've got a nice matrix you needed a tick in the box if you're actually going to make it to a senior management job. I mean, my ambitions lie in that direction. I see no point in staying here if I'm just going to muddle along at sort of analytical levels. So it lacks that guidance now, which makes it difficult.

While, for Hugh, the new rules of the career game appear straightforward and, indeed, have fortuitously positioned him well to win by them, for others there seems to be confusion and concern.

In her first turn of talk, Naomi is telling us about the operational and structural changes in the Bank which have forced the creation of the two wings. As a result, Naomi seems concerned there will be a significant reduction in cross-wing mobility, and thus a reduction in (career development) opportunities. She seems to be harking back to the concept of the 'all round central banker' and wondering how it will be possible to, in Hugh's terms, "do a tour" or, more specifically, to demonstrate the

capacity to develop Bank-wide utility (previously the pre-requisite for career success). As she comments, there appear to be two key problems - first: "people will veto cross-wing moves because they won't want to lose their good people" (implication: I'm a good person, so my mobility is reduced); and second: "I now have to talk to a personnel manager who doesn't know me, in a different wing" (and presumably, therefore, cannot be relied upon to 'look after' her best interests: a feature of the centrally planned model alluded to earlier by Luke).

Naomi's final comment in this first turn seems particularly revealing, and indeed indicative that she has begun to hear the messages of the new deal, but has not yet understood their implications: "it's actually restricting movement and opportunities for people who *do* still want Bank-wide development". Naomi seems to be missing the point that the swing toward economic specialism has fundamentally changed things: Bank-wide development is literally not an option anymore, regardless of whether or not individuals *do* still want it ! "To be a good all round central banker" she claims "you need to move around". Indeed, that *was* what people needed to do under the terms of the *old* deal; but that is no longer the requirement.

Naomi's final turn seems to reveal her underlying concern - (a concern which the data suggests resonates widely among the research subjects). That is, without a clear direction from the 'Centre' individuals have little or no idea what it might take to reach their destination rank: "If they could at least tell you which areas would give you certain sorts of experience, which areas would give you that profile, the sort of things if you like if you've got a nice matrix you needed a tick in the box if you're actually going to make it to a senior management job". This apparent obsession with 'guidance' has to be seen in the context of its implications for the individual. That is, the absence of internal market intelligence is likely to mean the individual will lose out in the competitive struggle to achieve status, and since status is, in many ways, the *raison d'être* of a career in the Bank, the 'removal' of this Bank-wide steer has a significant impact on the individual. The reality, of course, is that this is precisely what happens when individuals are told: 'manage your own career' !

Everyone is equal: and some are no longer more equal than others

SJA: How do you see the changes that've been occurring in the Bank over the last two or three years ?
How would you summarise them ?

SALLY: I think what people wanted was the Centre plus, around the periphery, the sort of freedom to manage your own career, because that was happening anyway. I mean, my last couple of moves were... happened through contacts, rather than going to ODG, and of course that's going to happen,

but I think you make that sort of grapevine process more open by job advertising, you know. Whereas in the past, if someone's got a contact, they'd just tell ODG what they wanted to happen and it would happen. That's far less open. Having job advertising just gives people a fair chance.

In the "good old bad old days" it seems an important task for individuals in the Bank was to understand who the key influencers of their career success might be, and thus to ensure visibility with those people. Thus, while the Centre, in the form of ODG played a role in identifying and presenting opportunities to people, some jobs would be filled 'outside' this system. As implied by Sally above, the old deal environment might have appeared to some as unfair: (a 'jobs for the boys' culture). Under the rules of the new system and, in particular with the introduction of job advertising, it seems to Sally that things are now more equitable: it "gives people a fair chance".

It's all smoke and mirrors !

SJA: From your perspective, how would you describe the changes you've seen in the Bank in the last two or three years ?

JAMES: Well, I think the Bank is fairly disjointed. The Bank-wide strategy has been articulated, and that's fine at that level. But the way the rest of the Bank has tried to reform or reappraise what it does... well, I don't think it's been consistent. More personally, I just think it's more of a disorganised place. We've got job advertising, where analysts supposedly have self managing careers. Jobs are advertised, they apply, and if they're successful, they get it. And that's not working. There are tensions in the system; rigidities.

SJA: Who's actually managing your career ?

JAMES: Well I am I guess, under the new system. The concept of central career management... if there is one, I don't think it's very clear. I think the groundswell of opinion is that this new system isn't working, and we may find ourselves moving back to something like the old system. I'm certainly not aware of there being a plan for me. Somewhere there's a piece of paper with a ceiling, where the Bank, in inverted commas, thinks I'm going to end up, but it hasn't been articulated to me.

SJA: Who has been responsible in the past for the way your career developed ?

JAMES: Well, until a year, two years ago we had a central career plan. When I came into the Bank they assigned me to FSD. After three and a half years there they would have... I mean there would have been impetus to move. To where I moved, that would have been my choice. Again, three to four years into that it would have been time to move again. And then my last job, that was decided by a Head of Division. So, the timing of moves is fairly structured, and that was sort of brokered by a central personnel unit. It has changed in the last year now because we've moved away from central planning to self management. You can now apply for jobs, and management can only hold you back for three months, theoretically.

SJA: So, do you feel more in control of your own career nowadays ?

JAMES: The potential is there for me to move.

SJA: Do you feel you have more choice ?

JAMES: You've got the opportunity to apply.

SJA: Do you feel you have more information now ? Is it clearer ?

JAMES: I suppose so, but behind the scenes there are still brokered moves. So, you know, there's a parallel system.

In the previous example we saw that Sally viewed the job advertising system as fundamentally fairer than the previous system. To use a competitive sporting metaphor (which seems appropriate given the careers culture at the Bank) it seems she is saying the system provides a 'level playing field'. In the above example, however, James appears more sceptical: "We've got job advertising, where analysts supposedly have self managing careers... And that's not working. There are tensions in the system; rigidities".

Like Naomi, it seems James is picking up many of the key messages of the new deal, but has not necessarily internalised them yet. Instead, he seems somewhat confused. When asked who he thinks is managing his career he says: "well I am I guess, under the new system". Later on, he reinforces this with the comment: "we've moved away from central planning to self management". However, whilst claiming this, James doesn't seem to have figured out the implications of this shift, since he seems reluctant to give up the notion of there being a plan somewhere which will determine his career: "Somewhere there's a piece of paper with a ceiling, where the Bank, in inverted commas, thinks I'm going to end up, but it hasn't been articulated to me". Maybe the plan doesn't exist anymore (if it ever did) and this is another of the consequences of a shift to career self management.

As regards the implications of this shift, James' final few comments are interesting. When asked: "do you feel more in control of your own career nowadays ?" he replies: "The potential is there for me to move" - (notice he neither agrees nor disagrees with the implication of the question). When asked: "Do you feel you have more choice ?" he replies: "You've got the opportunity to apply" - (again, no direct answer to the question). Taken together, these two comments seem to indicate a recognition that a shift in career policy and practice has been effected, but on the fundamental issues of control and choice, which ought logically to be key features of career self management, James is at best unsure. Perhaps his scepticism is that he sees, or believes, the transition to the new system has not yet been completed: "behind the scenes there are still brokered moves. So, you know, there's a parallel system".

Given this analysis, James' earlier comment is interesting: "I think the groundswell of opinion is that this new system isn't working, and we may find ourselves moving back to something like the old system". This is certainly what he *would* claim if he felt the old system was clearer to him, and he had not yet appropriated a new vocabulary with

which to unravel and articulate clearly the complexities and implications, for him, of a new deal.

Phew - I got out of that one just in time !

SJA: Thinking about things that have happened in the Bank in the last few years or so, from your perspective, tell me a little about the nature of the Bank and any changes you perceive.

GILES: Well they obviously have been very big. Uhm... the people most affected are probably the Officers, and I'd already left the ranks of the Officers by the time that happened. Uhm, they lost the sort of forty year career really very drastically and, you know, even those who were going to have a long career weren't gonna move upwards in pay terms and so on. That led to a big culture shift. And the next big change was the dominance of the economically trained people. It did affect me as we outlined earlier, and it now offered me opportunities. It's been a logical development path anyway, and the Ashridge changes which you've heard all about, those actually happened just as I was coming back from LSE, and they didn't affect the division I was in at all. Uhm, so I've been unaffected directly. And I've never had to be in a division which was affected by that set of changes at that time. So, that's the sort of... I've skilfully dodged through these changes.

In this passage, Giles is telling us, in fairly direct terms, of the changes he has observed in recent years. He notes, first, that the changes have been "very big" and then he asserts that, in particular, they have impacted the Officer (non-managerial) ranks: "they lost the sort of forty year career really very drastically and, you know, even those who were going to have a long career weren't gonna move upwards in pay terms and so on". This comment is interesting for two reasons: first, it seems somewhat categorical that this cadre has "lost" the forty year career. Given previous evidence that this research marks an evolutionary, not revolutionary, point in time for the Bank, this seems a little stark. Second, it also seems curious that Giles, by implication, is of the view that he is no longer likely to be affected by the changes since he had "left the ranks of the Officers by the time that happened". As an earlier passage illustrated, and this passage supports, Giles seems (like others) to have heard the messages of the new deal, but not to have fully thought through their potential implications. In this context, his final comments seem dangerously optimistic: "so I've been unaffected directly... I've skilfully dodged through these changes".

In the previous examples, subjects have been asked simply to comment on the nature of the changes as they perceive them. What of the implications of these changes both for themselves and for career policy and practice ? The following passages serve to make this clear.

Opportunism doesn't work anymore

SJA: You suggested that you weren't really a great career strategist, but rather more of an opportunist. I wondered whether that approach to your career has changed over time ?

LUKE: Hmm... That's a very good question. I think my natural inclination would be to remain opportunistic, and that used to be possible. You can argue about its merits, but it used to be possible. In the past, we've been used to a fairly centralised form of career planning, where the Personnel function played a pretty deterministic role in, you know, making sure that jobs were put to individuals, and giving them a chance to go this way or that way. And at that stage I took whatever came along. Certainly now, in the way things are being restructured, there's much more onus on the individual to decide how a career should be planned or structured, and to take more responsibility for his or her career. I suppose it's still possible, but if the Bank is a narrower and more specialised organisation than it was five or ten years ago, to be a genuine opportunist I guess you have to have acquired pretty deep and specialised skills in economics and/or in supervision. So, yeah, coming back to your original question, there's more emphasis on planning, strategic planning, and less emphasis on what turns up, because there's *much* less confidence that something *will* actually turn up !

In this passage, Luke is making a key distinction between the rules of the old deal and the new, insofar as it was possible under the old system (as we have seen earlier) to 'stick around, do a good job, and be promoted'. Thus, under the old system, it was possible to continue being successful by adopting a somewhat opportunistic strategy. In a sense, the concept of the 'all round central banker' allowed for this faith in the merits of generalist (Oxbridge/Foreign Office-type) skills, since people could turn their hand to many different tasks, and there were no, or at least few, barriers to entry in the different divisions. Now, however, the rules have changed, and as Luke suggests: "to be a genuine opportunist I guess you have to have acquired pretty deep and specialised skills". As a result, Luke tells us how he is responding to this shift in the rules of the career game: "there's more emphasis on planning, strategic planning, and less emphasis on what turns up". Why ? - "because there's *much* less confidence that something *will* actually turn up !".

I'd have to start at the bottom of the ladder again

SJA: How have all these changes affected your career ? Have they had a positive or negative impact ?

IAN: Uhm, I suppose on balance, in view of what I've said about keeping options open and trying to have, crudely speaking, two areas open to me - economics and supervision - it's made crossing between the two harder, at least in theory you think that. The Governor's said that it hasn't and it shouldn't but it must be, it is harder to do that. The pressure is for more technical skills, specialist economists specialising in monetary policy. Well you know, I would have to learn, you know, start as a new person again, which is fine if you're a new graduate or in your first or second job. By the time you're in your third or fourth job you don't want to become a new analyst again.

In this passage it seems fairly clear what Ian is concerned about as a result of the changes he has witnessed, namely that in order to maintain a degree of career mobility, he would have to "start as a new person again". The implication is clear, namely that Ian foresees he would have to start again at the bottom of the career ladder, or at the least go backwards for a time in order to then build up his skills and expertise. We don't get the impression from Ian in this particular passage that he is concerned about this. Indeed, it may be he has reconciled this in his own mind, and decided to continue developing his career in one of the two wings. However, this passage does point up again a major feature of the emerging new deal, namely the demise of the highly mobile generalist and the emerging importance of the multi-skilled specialist. It also points to a fundamental implication which has particular resonance in the Bank, namely that to 'switch' career paths, you *will* have to sacrifice vertical progression.

I'm not frightened: I'll just go somewhere else

SJA: How have you personally reacted to the recent changes in the Bank ?

KAREN: Partly because I don't think I'll be at the Bank for the next fifty years of my life, probably be dead... no twenty years... I mean I'll stay at the Bank as long as it interests me, but I have no fear of moving and I think I would be able to find a job outside, but it doesn't particularly frighten me. I think if you're forty and you've got three kids and you've been at the Bank since you were twenty one then that's quite different. I'll stay at the Bank as long as it interests me and as long as I can keep moving up. Once I stop moving up or work doesn't challenge me, doesn't interest me, then if I can't do anything about it then I would leave, and I'm quite honest about that so therefore I'm less frightened about it.

If the previous passage (Ian) points up the essential reality of the trade-off between mobility and progression, then the above passage highlights a typical and oft-sighted response on the part of Bank of England employees to some of the key features of the emerging new deal. In this passage, we might argue that Karen is positioning her future expectations very carefully. She claims by implication (somewhat untypically) that she is unconcerned about the loss of the forty year career because "I don't think I'll be at the Bank for the next fifty years of my life". She also claims she will only stay at the Bank "as long as it interests me". She argues that if one were forty with children, having spent twenty one years in the Bank, things might be different. But since she is neither forty nor, as we discover elsewhere in the interview, a parent, she feels differently. She claims that if work no longer interested her, or if she could not "keep moving up" she would leave. This is all perfectly plausible, but for one repeated feature of this talk, namely fear: "I have no fear... it doesn't particularly frighten me... I'm less frightened about it". To make the comment once would seem

reasonable; twice might be odd, but not unsurprising; three times, and we are left wondering whether Karen is, in fact, *very* troubled by the changes she is witnessing, and indeed 'frightened'.

The era of the intelligent generalist is over

SJA: How have all these changes impacted the philosophy of careers, and policy and so on ?

MARIE: I think it's meant that people's career aspirations are now somewhat narrower and more limited than they were previously. And there's still a lot of unanswered questions. For instance, in Supervision it was previously the case that you would move out and then come back. It was very typical for people to be appointed into senior managers jobs with no prior experience and, I think, in most areas, now you've got to be more of a specialist, for the credibility. So, there's a sense that the era of the intelligent generalist is over. And, a lot of people came to the Bank for that reason, because they knew they didn't have to be an expert. So that's quite difficult. But until they decide you can be a career banking supervisor, uhm, people don't know quite where they're at. I mean, should they accept another job in the area, or should they move out and broaden, because there's still this sense that unless you show you've got Bank-wide utility, and are comfortable with all the concepts, you won't actually progress beyond a certain point.

SJA: How have you personally reacted to all of these changes ?

MARIE: Uhm... I think it has concerned me to a fairly significant degree. I know that there are some areas that are simply barred to me because I don't have a masters in economics, and so I think the choices are more limited. The further up you go, the more competition there is for jobs, and the fewer jobs there are. I mean, if there is a more professional approach to banking supervision then I'll probably be OK. I've got enough experience now. You know, I've been told I'll get a senior manager's job without any difficulty. What happens after that doesn't bother me terribly because, well, goodness knows what else will change. But I think I do feel a lot less confident than I did about having a very long term career here. So, I'm not quite sure what I'd do if I suddenly found I'd plateaued.

As we have already seen, the emergence of a new deal in the Bank seems to be marked by the end of the era of the 'intelligent generalist'. This feature, we can argue, is central to the case study - it marks a fundamental change in the rules and not necessarily, as some speakers suggest, simply an indication that the pendulum has swung over again. In the above passage, we see the potency of this issue in Marie's struggle to reconcile the issues this new reality brings forth. Thus, Marie claims that the changes have meant individuals' career aspirations are now "somewhat narrower" (less choice, as a function of the two wing split) and "more limited" (perhaps a reference to delayering). In addition, she sees a change in the rules which apply to Supervision. Previously (old deal), people would move in and out of Supervision, and even be appointed later to senior positions without prior specialist experience. Now (new deal) "you've got to be more of a specialist, for the credibility". At this level, Marie seems to have understood the terms of the emerging new deal, but again is unsure how they will play out. As she says: "until they decide you can be a career

banking supervisor, uhm, people don't know quite where they're at" (*they*, in this context, means 'the Bank').

As a result, Marie claims, people are not sure whether to accept an offer of a new role in their existing area or whether to move out to a different area. Why ? Because, like others previously, she is holding onto the notion of the 'all round central banker' and, at the same time, is alluding to the widespread view that progression still requires 'a tour': "there's still this sense that unless you show you've got Bank-wide utility, and are comfortable with all the concepts, you won't actually progress beyond a certain point". This and similar comments earlier seem to point to another essential feature of the careers landscape in the Bank, namely that individuals seem reluctant to exercise their rights to choice and flexibility (i.e. to manage their own careers) for fear they may make the 'wrong' decisions and thus underpotentialise their future career success (realised rank). Thus, to take a specific example, provided by Marie, we can see why those in Supervision may be reluctant to leave in order to broaden since, in the process, they may effectively be giving up their rights to return at a more senior level. In exercising their rights to choice and self determination, the risk is they may later be found 'guilty' of sabotaging their own career.

In Marie's second turn, she speaks of how she has become concerned "to a fairly significant degree". Clearly, the possibility of being "barred" entry to the Monetary Stability wing represents a reduction in career choices, and the question marks around the possibility of a career in supervision mean she has become "less confident".

The more interesting comment, however, is again a reference to the linkage in the Bank between the notion of career success and the actuality of realised rank. While Marie acknowledges the possibility of progression - ("I've been told I'll get a senior manager's job without any difficulty") - she nevertheless reports feeling less confident about having a long term career. Why ? Because it seems she is uncertain whether she could progress beyond senior manager level, and is thus fearful of plateauing: "I'm not quite sure what I'd do if I suddenly found I'd plateaued". (As we have seen earlier, ceasing to progress seems very powerfully to mean the 'end' of the career *per se*).

Finally in this section, we return again to Luke, as he attempts to unravel the vocabulary of the old and new in order to reconcile what a career now means.

I'm not really sure what 'career' means anymore

SJA: Is it clear these days what a career in the Bank is all about ?

LUKE: Is it clear ? Hmm... [*very long pause*]. Well, the fact that I've had to think about it for such a long time before I could begin to produce an answer suggests that it's less than wholly clear. Uhm... Well, I can tell you what it's *not* at the moment; maybe that's the best way into it. It's certainly not about getting by and doing a decent job anymore, and it's certainly not about time served. There is a very clear message, much clearer message I suppose, that to prosper and to have a long term career you've got to do well. I think those are the things that are clear to me. Uhm, I think what is less clear is, delivering a message as to what the prospects of making it are. Uhm... yeah, I suppose since I'm still around you can deduce that I think I've got reasonable prospects, but that view probably needs refreshing quite soon. I need to speak to someone to get a bit more of an up to date view of what they think I can do. But, so, that's one thing. The other thing is, what are we going to do with all these people who reach a point where they're no longer progressing ? If you take a harsh view, what are we going to do with this bulk who... how will we get rid of them ? So, to come back to your question: is the concept of a career clear ? Well, I think in some respects it is. In other respects it still needs to be defined.

The first thing that strikes you about this passage (especially when listening to the audio tape of the interview) is the inordinately long time it takes (nearly twenty seconds) for Luke to begin, as he puts it, to "produce an answer". When he does, it is interesting to note that he builds his definition first by making reference to what he believes a career in the Bank is *not* anymore, namely "it's certainly not about getting by and doing a decent job anymore, and it's certainly not about time served". Instead, he suggests, a career under the terms of the new deal is about 'doing well' (making a contribution as opposed to simply occupying a role ?). These, he says, are the things which are clear to him. As he goes on, what seems less clear are "the prospects of making it" (presumably achieving his potential, as symbolised by attained rank).

Luke's subsequent comment: "what are we going to do with all these people who reach a point where they're no longer progressing ?" is particularly interesting. It seems to suggest that there is one facet of the old deal notion of career he is struggling to reconcile, namely he still sees a career in the Bank fundamentally as a series of promotions over time. Thus, he is unable to countenance the thought that, in the future, careers may no longer have this essential quality. His difficulty in explaining what he thinks the career may be about, therefore, may simply be a function of the fact that if careers are not about continuous progression, he doesn't know *what* they will be about: quite literally, the length of his earlier pause may suggest he cannot find a plausible answer to the question. It's almost a case of: if continuous progression is not part of the new deal, then there won't be any careers to talk of *per se*; the question cannot be answered !

As Luke suggests: "to come back to your question: is the concept of a career clear ? Well, I think in some respects it is. In other respects it still needs to be defined". Indeed ! The curious point about this comment, however, is that Luke remarks "*it* still needs to be defined", not 'I need to reflect further and come up with a definition'. This is again a subtle indexical reference to another enduring feature of the culture of the Bank, namely paternalism. In effect Luke is saying: in due course they'll tell me what the answer is, much as in the earlier part of his talk he says: "I need to speak to someone to get a bit more of an up to date view of what they think I can do". In other words, while many of the messages of the new deal have been heard and, to some extent, unravelled and interpreted, there is still this somewhat Orwellian undertone of unreality evident in subjects' talk, the key tenet of which is: in due course *they'll* tell me what to think and do.

TYPICAL CAREERS, THE RULES OF THE GAME, SUCCESS

Given the fundamental importance of 'doing well' and achieving a degree of career 'success', it seems useful to reflect further on these issues. In the following passages, subjects talk of what they see as typical careers in the Bank (old and new); the rules of the career game; and the meaning of success.

It's going to get more difficult to move up

SJA: What does a typical career in the Bank look like ?

JAMES: Well, the management structure's been flattened, so I guess in terms of achieving management responsibility, it's going to be more difficult than it was previously. If I, you know, had the thirty year career in the Bank, I guess quite easily I could expect just one more promotion, unless I was able to convince people I was good enough to get to Head of Division level. But there aren't a lot of people at that level, so it's difficult to do that. I guess there are ceilings for somebody with my performance to date after nine years in being where I am. Maybe there's one more move up to senior manager level.

This first example provides a particularly interesting answer to what is a very broad question. Given the themes subjects have spoken about previously, we might have expected to hear something about variety of roles, movement between different areas, and the essentially 'interesting' nature of the work people do in the Bank - many of these features were claimed earlier to have been significant reasons for joining the Bank. Instead, we hear James talk about a notion of career which, presumably, he has appropriated in his subsequent time in the Bank. Thus he talks of the difficulty in

"achieving management responsibility" (note the word 'achieving' not 'reaching'). He goes on to make reference to how things might have been if the thirty (?) year career was still on offer, and to what seems like a realignment of his ultimate expectations: "If I... had the thirty year career... I guess quite easily I could expect just one more promotion... [but now] I guess there are ceilings for somebody with my performance to date... Maybe there's [only] one more move up...".

It's typical to move around, but I've done better than the average

SJA: Is your career so far typical of a career in the Bank ?

JEMIMA: It's typical in the sense that I've sort of moved around at about the same frequency as other people. I mean it's not typical in that a) I think I've done slightly better than my peers and also the fact that I've done Private Office, and very few people do, so that's not typical. So it's got that element in it which the average person - or, most people - won't have. But it's typical in that I've moved around.

SJA: So in the first five years or so, compared with your peers, how well do you think you did ?

JEMIMA: Oh, the same.

SJA: And, how about now ?

JEMIMA: Probably slightly better.

SJA: When you're trying to assess how well you're doing, what do you draw on by way of evidence to say: well, yes, I'm doing quite well ?

JEMIMA: Well I don't really think about it an awful lot, but I think what I thought about when you asked me whether I was doing slightly better is the rank I am compared to a lot of people who joined with me.

SJA: Do you feel you're doing a valuable job ?

JEMIMA: Well, that's difficult. If I look at what I've done in the last five years there's no doubt I've made more of a contribution to the Bank than a lot of my peers. But that's partly because of the position I was in. I had to do it. I mean, I'm not saying they couldn't do it if they were in that position. The thing about Private Office is that a lot of people can do it, but you're only given a chance to do it if you've shown a sparkle elsewhere. I mean, a lot of Private Office is just simple organisation and administration. But you're only allowed to have that opportunity if you've shown some sort of intellectual ability.

In this passage, Jemima goes some way to providing the context lacking in the previous answer from James. Thus, we learn she regards herself as being typical insofar as she has "moved around". However, the remainder of her talk is clearly again a continuation of the themes we have seen earlier, albeit in this instance Jemima more explicitly seems to be setting herself apart from her peers. Thus she tells us: "I mean it's not typical in that a) I think I've done slightly better than my peers and also the fact that I've done Private Office, and very few people do, so that's not typical. So it's got that element in it which the average person - or, most people - won't have".

This is a complex passage to unravel, but it seems to indicate the way in which many individuals at the Bank interpret certain vocabulary. In claiming that she has done "slightly better than [her] peers" it seems Jemima has interpreted the word 'typical' to imply the norm, or the benchmark. In addition it seems she sees her role in Private Office as a competitive differentiator. Third we see reference to "the average person" - (as in an earlier passage, Jemima clearly doesn't see herself as in any way 'average'). All three of these concepts seem firmly to be rooted in a discourse of competition. As a result, this passage seems to spell out why any question about typicality is perhaps inevitably going to be met with an answer about relativity.

The following two passages seek to determine the extent to which subjects are mindful of the rules of the old and new career games, and thus pose the question: what does it take to get on around here ?

It's about status, and I suppose... politics

SJA: What does it take to get on around here ?

LUCY: It's a very competitive place. It's not like in the private sector where everyone's competing for the bonus. It's status here. I think it's a bit like track and field versus a team game. If you're in the market, then you're thinking: I can better that bonus, I can better that return, whatever it is. It's like you against the clock. It's like how good are you against this external thing. Here it's very hard to measure, so the only way you get that feeling is to think: oh, I got promoted before they did, or I've been invited onto that committee, or I can tear a strip off your paper, academically. I suppose people describe it as politics. A bit of self publicity goes an awful long way. If you're fast, that really helps, if you think really quickly, 'cos then you can deliver on things. It's very small at the top. People make decisions about who gets bumped up, so it's important to have them standing behind you, to have the right image. You have to be on somebody's coat tails to get the support.

In the early part of this passage, Lucy reminds us of the competitive environment that is the Bank. She also draws a distinction between the private sector (in which, by implication, the achievement of very tangible results drives bonuses, which in turn drive promotion) - "it's like how good are you against this external thing" - and the Bank, in which one's measure of 'achievement' is status; literally, did I get promoted ahead of the next guy ? This is a somewhat stark distinction which, in a sense, serves to reinforce one of the tenets of the old deal in the Bank, namely that success is not necessarily determined by one's ability to make a tangible contribution !

Toward the end of this passage, Lucy gives us a more explicit answer to the question as to what it takes to get on. Thus, she makes reference to self publicity, a quick mind,

sponsorship and image. Earlier on in the passage she makes reference to the importance of being invited onto committees, or to tearing a strip (academically) off someone's paper. She goes on to say: "I suppose people describe it as politics". This is a curious phrase to some extent, since academic credentials and a 'quick mind' have long been regarded in the Bank as thoroughly reputable and, indeed, fundamental core skills, and sponsorship and impression management (as we heard earlier from Keith) are increasingly important. This passage does, therefore, leave the reader wondering whether Lucy really understands what it takes to get on in the Bank.

You have to be 'able' - a bit of a boffin

SJA: What do you think it takes to get on in the Bank these days ?

IAN: I think the key thing to get on is to be *able*... in the sense of... intelligent, and able to apply your intelligence to analytical things, problem solving. If you look at the people I've worked with - senior people - then they are very capable, intellectually capable. Hard working too; that's relevant. I think those are the priorities. But at the very top levels, why Eddie George is where he is, I don't know. It's hard to say.

SJA: Do you think there's a requirement to have an abundance of social or political skills ?

IAN: Uhm, probably no is the simple answer. In the senior jobs, ultimately you have to be a bit of a boffin, and so it's difficult to find people like that who are also able to manage out and down. People are not promoted in this place because they're good at managing a team.

In this example we see again the importance of intellectual ability, or more specifically the ability to "apply your intelligence to analytical things, problem solving". Ian suggests that this is a key determinant of success. In addition, Ian suggests that technical expertise rather than people skills is a key determinant of success: "ultimately you have to be a bit of a boffin... People are not promoted in this place because they're good at managing a team". While each of these points might factually be true, what is also interesting to us here is that these prerequisites to success are, in many ways, resonant of the prerequisites of the old deal. It is noticeable we see little in the way of talk about long hours, added responsibility, broader skills or tolerance of change and ambiguity - these, it was outlined in Chapter 2, are the fundamental features of the new deal in other organisations.

In the remaining passages in this section, we see talk of 'success', both the definition of success in the Bank, and individuals' estimations of their own success.

I can't say I feel very successful: but I'm not sure why not

SJA: Have you enjoyed what you've been doing in the Bank ?

IAN: Yes.

SJA: On balance, has your time in the Bank been a happy time ?

IAN: Uhm... Yes, I think so.

SJA: Do you feel successful ?

IAN: Hmm... That's a very difficult question. I suppose my usual answer to that is always to relate it to what I said before, in the sense that in this place you don't measure success by how much you're getting paid or how big your company car is. So, I guess successful in the sense that I'm pursuing a career that I'm reasonably enjoying. So, it's a case of you having done reasonably well, then yes, but I can't say I feel very successful. I'm not sure why not.

In this passage Ian is telling us that his time in the Bank has been enjoyable and, on the whole, a happy time. As such, we might assume he has achieved a degree of career satisfaction and, thus, would expect him to have felt somewhat successful. However, when directly asked the question he replies: "Hmm... That's a very difficult question". Why difficult ? His following comments serve to remind us that, in the Bank, people are not judged to be successful by the external trappings of success, such as money (because relative to the City, pay at the Bank is regarded as 'poor') or cars (because in the Bank, as in the City, cars are not part of the package). The only measure left in the Bank by which to judge someone's success (as we have heard before) is their status: the extent to which they have scaled the organisational hierarchy. Thus, we find that Ian seems to be saying he has done "reasonably well" but at the same time doesn't feel very successful. The passage doesn't provide us with any clues, but by extension it is reasonable to suspect that Ian feels he either has not progressed as well as his peers or, having high expectations for his career, has not 'achieved' the position in the hierarchy he might have wanted to achieve.

There are *times* I've felt successful, but it'd be nice to be grossly over-promoted

SJA: Do you feel successful ?

LUCY: There are *times* I have felt successful. I would describe it as plateaus, as sort of getting to different levels and plateaux, and right now I'm in either a plateau or a pause before the next push up.

SJA: You said: there are *times* when I've felt successful. What do you mean by that ?

LUCY: I was very successful in GEMMD, and I got the study leave on the back of that. But because I haven't worked with many of the people I joined with I find it quite difficult to measure... whereas when I got promoted to looking after a group, that's demonstrably different to somebody else. What I don't have a good perspective on is, well you don't know what the counterfactual is: what if I'd done this, what if I'd done that ? I mean, how do you evaluate that ?

SJA: How would you define 'career success' ?

LUCY: Reaching your potential, and that's what makes you feel successful, and that would deliver satisfaction. I mean obviously it would be nice to be grossly over-promoted to the point at which you feel completely uncomfortable, but... Being successful is feeling some satisfaction, but it's also about having it recognised by others. So that implies promotion, responsibility, increasingly demanding work.

SJA: So does it mean that to be successful over time in career terms you necessarily have to move up to more senior levels ? Does it have this vertical dimension to it ?

LUCY: Yes. I guess my expectation of that has changed given the Bank's policies, but relativities are important too. The flatter things are the more important relativities are. So, if everybody else is about there, and you know there's a quality differential between yourself and someone else and that is not recognised... So, take out the status recognition, or downplay that... But if that is not recognised in some other way, I'm pissed off. So it does have a vertical dimension. So, if I'm playing to my strengths long term, that would imply some vertical reporting, because I would necessarily be supervising other people, so you're therefore more senior.

Lucy's first comment here - "there are *times* I have felt successful" - begs the question as to the times when she has *not* felt successful. Her subsequent comments about plateaux provide an interesting notion, namely that she has felt successful when she has experienced a sense of momentum, and she has not felt successful when she has regarded herself to be "in a plateau or a pause before the next push up". This comment is interesting from two perspectives: first, the notion of a 'pause' implies she feels there is an inevitability to her progress and that, in due course, she will continue to 'fast forward'. Second, the reference to "the next push up" implies that she sees any pause not really as a plateuing of her career in the literal sense, rather as a more transitory phenomenon; a prelude to continued vertical progression. These features are, again, very powerful illustrations of the essence of individuals' conceptions of a career in the Bank, reinforced by Lucy's response to the request for clarification when she talks of being promoted to look after a group: "that's demonstrably different to somebody else".

When asked directly: "how would you define 'career success' ?" these key themes surface again. As Lucy makes clear, success for her is about "reaching your potential" - a reference to status, as her subsequent comment about being "grossly over-promoted" illustrates. As she goes on, "it implies promotion, responsibility, increasingly demanding work".

In the final turn, the importance of vertical progression is again reinforced. It is also interesting to see how, as a new deal emerges (the hierarchy is flattened), Lucy feels that relativities become much more important.

I've got there in the end

SJA: What's your idea of success ? How do you judge if you're being successful ?

KEITH: When people rely on, and they respect your opinion and they seek it, then that's very satisfying. But when you look back, you may think: well, I was a fool and people used me. I didn't get very far in seniority terms, and hence my pension isn't very large, but in the short term it's very nice for people to consult you.

SJA: So, if you look at the whole of your career in the Bank, do you feel successful ?

KEITH: Well, I think, as I mentioned before, I had a spell where it was a rip-roaring success as far as I was concerned, but because the work I was doing wasn't very high profile, nobody cared. But what I'm doing now, I find that people are interested in it, not only in the Bank, but outside. I enjoy the job very much. So, in terms of achieving my personal goals, yeah, I've got there now, but it's taken longer than I would have liked. But I've got there in the end.

In the opening turn in this passage it seems Keith is about to offer us a very different and, arguably, untypical answer to the question of success when he talks of people respecting and seeking his opinion. However, his subsequent comments betray, again, the importance of seniority. What he seems to be saying is that being consulted is very satisfying, but perhaps a little naive: "when you look back, you may think: well, I was a fool and people used me. I didn't get very far in seniority terms".

In his second turn, it is not entirely clear what Keith's goal has been. It seems that, having his work recognised, both inside and outside the Bank, was his ambition: his work is now noticed and people care what he is doing. However, his comment: "I've got there now, but it's taken longer than I would have liked" seems, at the same time, to be an allusion to his position. (It is worth noting that, in an earlier passage, Keith talked of success as having influence, but that influence is also bound up with status - 'I want to do something interesting - but you can also call me Boss !').

The law of diminishing returns is bound to set in

SJA: How do you feel about your career ? Do you feel successful ?

JEMIMA: I feel successful, yes. I *do* feel successful. I've been very successful, but if... because nobody leaves, it's like a pyramid. So your sort of marginal increase in promotion, you know, and your marginal responsibility's going to get less. So I made a decision a year ago that I would give this job a year, get the experience, and then consider leaving. So I'm now trying to leave. And it's the first time I've ever thought about leaving the Bank. I mean, I haven't thought about it for the last ten years. But I think I suddenly sat back and thought: well, I'm not going to have my sort of incremental increase in responsibility, and in fact in my promotion, which has been quite good so far, responsibility, promotion, uhm, and also my marginal enjoyment, each year, has increased quite a bit. And I just think the law of diminishing returns is going to set in. I've really enjoyed the Bank. I've got a lot out of it, but I just think the law of diminishing returns is going to set in on my sort of enjoyment, the

responsibility that I'm given, my promotions. I mean, I might be wrong. But I think, ten years, and now's the time to look outside, so I've started to look.

In this final example, Jemima seems somewhat adamant that she *has* been successful: "I feel successful, yes. I *do* feel successful. I've been very successful". As her subsequent comments imply, she has clearly achieved a degree of hierarchical progression, and this is at the root of her interpretation of the question. However, as she goes on to explain, it is clear she is also concerned as to whether this 'success' will continue because the chances of her continuing to secure promotions as she gets closer to the top of the pyramid will, naturally, decrease. As she puts it: "your sort of marginal increase in promotion, you know, and your marginal responsibility's going to get less". As a result of this analysis, Jemima is clearly indicating a preference to leave the Bank in order to maintain this continued sense of success: "I'm not going to have my sort of incremental increase in responsibility, and in fact in my promotion, which has been quite good so far, responsibility, promotion, uhm, and also my marginal enjoyment, each year, has increased quite a bit. And I just think the law of diminishing returns is going to set in".

WHAT COULD THE BANK BE DOING DIFFERENTLY ?

In this section we see illustrations of two key themes: first, the sense of emotion generated by the lack of direction from the Centre which has come about as a result of the move away from centrally planned careers; and second, instances of the juxtaposition of old deals and new deals vocabulary.

Doing *something* would be better than doing nothing !

SJA: What do you think the Bank could be doing, that it isn't doing, or what could it be doing better, in the area of career development and so on ?

KAREN: Well I think as it's doing almost nothing at the moment it couldn't be very difficult. I think people of my age and younger, but particularly some of the people who have been here three or four years, they're twenty five, they're in the highest risk category because they could well go, work somewhere else, particularly as the money would be a lot better outside. Also I think everybody has this good old three year itch don't they ? The Bank ought to be doing more to keep people. Maybe it doesn't want to keep people. I don't know what the strategy is, but I don't think they're helping people enough to see what the options are. It's very difficult. Different parts of the Bank are very different. We need someone, a central place, to say: have you thought about this or there might be something coming up here, why don't you give it a go ? You're totally dependent on your senior manager and the ability of your senior manager to have contacts, know what's around. I'm very lucky. I've got a very good one who's worked all over the place and I think is very highly thought of and he's, you know.

considered to be a high flier, and he cares what happens to us, but I know plenty of people who don't have that benefit, and there is no fall back mechanism at the centre at present to help them.

SJA: What could the Bank do to persuade you to stay longer ?

KAREN: I think most people, unless you're very senior, and one of the real high flier, you don't really have any confidence in what the Bank wants out of you. I think it would be helpful if there was more guidance. One of the big planks of the new policy is that you should be responsible for your own career, and that's right, and that's good. But, you've got to have an idea of your own self worth and where they see you going in order to guide your own decisions.

In the opening turn to this passage we see a potent example of the frustrations surrounding the changes in career development policy which seem to lie beneath the surface for a number of individuals: "well I think as it's [the Bank] doing almost nothing at the moment it couldn't be very difficult [to do better]". What's interesting with this comment, of course, is the sense (as earlier) that the implications of the shift to career self management have not yet had time to become embedded either in Karen's mind or in her discursive practices. She is still in the process of unravelling this, as her subsequent comment implies: "The Bank ought to be doing more to keep people. Maybe it doesn't want to keep people". As Karen quite rightly surmises, in a period of downsizing and delayering, it may be entirely legitimate for the Bank to do very little to address individuals' concerns, since this would support a policy of 'natural wastage'.

Karen's subsequent comments appear to point up the specific frustration, namely her lack of a broader perspective on the range of options. In the absence of an effective job advertising system, it is clear she feels "totally dependent" on her senior manager and his ability to generate contacts across the Bank, and thus be aware of the opportunities available. Two points come out of this. First, we are reminded of the particular importance of options in the context of the type of career opportunity structure in the Bank - individuals have a strong preference for what economists might call 'perfect knowledge' in order to minimise the chances of making the 'wrong' career decision, and thus sub-optimising their longer term career success (or hierarchical velocity). Second, we see again the undertones of a paternalistic culture in which the individual seems entirely reliant on others to specify how to navigate the careers landscape. This continues to seem somewhat odd, in that otherwise intelligent and ambitious individuals appear unable or unwilling to set about the task of creating their own networks, thus reducing their dependency on others.

In the final turn we see another potent dimension to the frustration, namely the apparent absence of a clear reference point against which to establish one's own

relative value: "you've got to have an idea of your own self worth and where they see you going in order to guide your own decisions".

We still need to know what we have to do to progress

SJA: Do you think there any specific things which could be put in place to aid people's career development which aren't currently in place ?

KEITH: Well, to be quite honest I'm not that interested. I've ceased to have much of an interest in this. I don't know what exists *now*. I would just make the point that I like the idea of job advertising and moving yourself around, but I do think they need some kind of central function to give you advice and to give you the centre's view on what you should be doing to progress in the Bank, so people weren't planning a career - or their next job move, which is as far as I look - which wasn't going to work. And, the second thing they need to do is to allow people to cut across the grain if that's what you want to do, because they *are* saying that to get on you have to move around. Well, if they're saying that then they need to ease that for people who want to do that.

In this passage we see a number of interesting themes. First, Keith seems to be portraying a degree of disengagement from the career development process as he comments: "I've ceased to have much of an interest in this". His comment implies that he might have had an interest at one time but, as in an earlier passage, he is now sceptical of the merits of the system and/or the Bank's ability to provide him with guidance of any significant value. Perhaps as a result of this disengagement, he comments: "I don't know what exists *now*".

Second, we see again a reference to the need for some form of centralised view in order to give people steerage on their career decisions. In earlier passages we have speculated that the reason for individuals' sensitivities on this point is that, in the absence of such 'perfect knowledge' there is a very real risk of making the 'wrong' career decision. In this passage, Keith's comments would seem to support this theory: "they need some kind of central function to give you advice... on what you should be doing to progress in the Bank, so people weren't planning a career... which wasn't going to work".

Third, like Naomi, Keith is reporting what seems to be a confusion in the messages the Bank is conveying about the new rules, namely: "they *are* [still] saying that to get on you have to move around". However, as Keith sees it, more needs to be done to ease things for those who do wish to pursue that kind of career.

People need to feel the *possibility* of movement

SJA: You suggested that having centralised career development people is important. Why is that ?

LUCY: If you look at my career, I felt out of the loop for a very long time, and when I was in the stage before I went to a Development Centre you didn't have many chats. But if you worked in a large division you'd have a staff manager who you felt was interested in you and where you were going. Whereas if you're in a small division you sit with the staff manager, it's not the same, and you know they don't have the same perspective. They're not juggling you with twenty five other people. You work with someone who's dealing with a very small area. So you felt rather isolated. It's moving around, the different speeds you move around. If somebody puts you in an area where you get the opportunity to show, you shine, and everyone knows it, and the senior person is very important, or your bank goes belly up and you're with the Governor the whole time, that's very important. The feelgood factor is very important, and having someone central who knows your name and knows you're different to other people. People need to feel movement. You need to give people the feeling of aiming somewhere. If you don't do that, they go backwards. You need to give people the feeling of the possibility of movement. If not, you need to pay us rate for the job.

While the reality of the emerging new deal may well be that movement (either lateral/cross-wing, or vertical) is impeded, it seems clear from Lucy here that there is still a need to create the illusion of movement. As she comments, rather bluntly: "You need to give people the feeling of the possibility of movement. If not, you need to pay us rate for the job". As we have seen earlier, this sense of forward momentum, or career velocity, is especially important in the Bank, given the absence of tangible 'badges of worth'. Such movement, and with it concomitant increases in status over time literally create the sense of 'having a career' as well as the possibility of 'career success' - "it's moving around, the different speeds you move around. You need to give people the feeling of aiming somewhere. If you don't do that, they go backwards". For many, including Lucy, this seems to be fundamental - the key trade-off between the public and private sector. The absence of such momentum thus serves to highlight the opportunity cost foregone by way of a premium salary. In many ways this is a classic dimension of the transition from old to new deal: literally, a move from a relational to a more transactional contract. Where there is no security and guarantee of progression, then money becomes the compensator: the career in classical terms (a long term relationship, characterised by incremental rewards over time) is replaced by the job (a simple exchange of labour for financial gain).

In these next two examples this feeling of a transition from old to new is given an added sense of reality given the interplay between the metaphors and vocabulary of the old and the new.

The Bank doesn't owe me: we're about even on that score

SJA: What do you see as the Bank's responsibilities for your career versus your responsibilities ?

LUKE: Some people, some more than others, feel quite impotent given the changes that have happened in the Bank. I don't think the Bank owes me a great deal. I think we're probably about even on that score. Certainly, in comparison to my peer group, I've done quite well in the last ten years. But what I *would* expect of the Bank is to give me a pretty clear idea of what they think is going to happen to me. So, I'd like a fairly unambiguous message which, as I think I said earlier, is a bit out-dated. And, I mean, if that message turned out to be less positive than I would want it to be, then I would expect them to do whatever they could to equip me for... exit. The Bank has got to allow people to develop, and give them skills that are portable. If the Bank wants me to look after myself, that's fine. I'll do that to the best of my ability, but it's actually got to give me some sort of structure within which to help myself, whether that's training or scope for picking up additional qualifications, something like that, then yeah. One of the problems the Bank is facing is that there are a lot of people here who've locked themselves in, thinking they'd be here forever, and now that's no longer the case. So, what the hell have I got to bring to the party ?

In this passage, Luke begins by reporting a sense of impotency given the changes that have occurred in the Bank. It is not clear why he would claim this, but the implication seems to be that a lack of direction from the Centre means a lack of clarity in terms of career decisions. However, unlike Keith earlier, it seems Luke is quite satisfied that the Bank has 'paid out' on its part of the 'transaction': "I don't think the Bank owes me a great deal. I think we're probably about even on that score".

Further on in the passage, Luke alludes very clearly to the terms of the old deal: "what I *would* expect of the Bank is to give me a pretty clear idea of what they think is going to happen to me. So, I'd like a fairly unambiguous message". (As Luke recognises, this is an expectation which is probably now "a bit out-dated"). By contrast, in the remainder of his talk, he articulates an entirely different vocabulary, one which markedly contrasts with that which precedes it. Thus, we hear that if the Bank cannot give him an unambiguous message then he would expect the Bank to "equip me for exit". This means allowing him to develop "skills that are portable". He recognises that he might have to look after himself, but he would expect the Bank to provide him "some sort of structure within which to help myself, whether that's training or scope for picking up additional qualifications, something like that...".

Finally, Luke seems to be recognising the nature of the new transactional contract with its emphasis on contribution: "what the hell have I got to bring to the party ?".

It's all a lot of Personnel speak

SJA: What could the Bank be doing differently ?

NAOMI: I think *the* most concrete thing at the moment, however loose, would be to get back to some form of career planning, so it's not always: I've got two years here, and then I'll be scratching around looking for where my next two years are going to be. The last time I spoke to Personnel I got the message: well, the structure of the Bank is changing, so I can't advise you where your future in the Bank is, which I don't think is any use to anybody. You know, we don't know what the Bank's going to look like in five years' time so we can't possibly advise you where you should be aiming for.

SJA: I suppose some people might call that an abdication of responsibility.

NAOMI: Yes. I mean, what else is Personnel there for ? Everyone accepts that things are changing, but there ought to be some discussion about: yes, these are the various options, and these are the various routes to get there. At the moment we're getting all this Personnel speak about it's not doing specific jobs but it's about acquiring skills. Well, fair enough, you do try to take control of your career and you do try to get skills but you have to know what it is you're aiming for that you need those skills for. But there's nothing there. It's probably not the way to motivate your thirtysomethings ! I think you have to get something central back that career plans for the graduates because it's hopeless otherwise. I mean, I've seen three different personnel managers and a secondments manager just to try to get a feel for what's out there, without any sort of advice. You need somebody who can actually sit there, who knows how the Bank works, and can give some sensible advice as to where you should be going.

In this passage, we again see an illustration of the frustrations people have with the lack of centralised career planning. As Naomi suggests, without this perspective, it becomes difficult to see where one's future career path lies. She goes on to comment that, given the changes in the Bank, Personnel is unable to speculate as to where individuals' futures may lie. As she suggests, rather directly: "I don't think [that] is any use to anybody". Again, we are left with the impression of someone who is entirely reliant on the Centre's view of her career, and incapable of envisioning a path for herself. When asked whether she thinks this is an abdication of responsibility by the Centre, Naomi comments: "Yes. I mean, what else is Personnel there for ?". As a result, we should not be too surprised that she goes on, in somewhat pejorative terms: "At the moment we're getting all this Personnel speak about it's not doing specific jobs but it's about acquiring skills. Well, fair enough, you do try to take control of your career and you do try to get skills but you have to know what it is you're aiming for that you need those skills for". As we can see, Naomi is clearly beginning to recognise the new vocabulary and the type of career management system it implies. However, as she reports, she is unable to 'buy into' the new career deal since she still lacks the clarity to know what she's aiming for - (the Bank hasn't told her what she's aiming for !).

THE FUTURE

Finally in this chapter, we look at talk about the future - or, more accurately, how people construct 'stories about the future'. As will be seen below, the overwhelming response to questions on this subject is, effectively: let's see how far I can get in *this* organisation, and then I'll decide; if I don't keep moving up, I'll leave.

I'll establish whether I'm going to make it to the next level: then I'll decide

SJA: How do you see your career developing ?

LUCY: Uhm, the next year and a half is crucial because of the policy changes I've referred to and the pressure to perform. Within that period I'll seek to establish whether I'm going to make it to the next level up or not, and once I have that information, not that it's clear cut, I'll take a judgement, then I'll decide whether to stay or not.

SJA: And if you stayed after the eighteen month period, what might your future career in the Bank look like ?

LUCY: I would aim to be a senior manager within the division that I'm now in, possibly via section manager or possibly direct. I would envisage doing that for a chunk of time. After that I'd have to make the decision depending on how the Bank looks whether I wanted to go back out into the Bank and do some more odd interesting jobs or just remain being a section senior manager

This passage is a good - and somewhat typical - illustration of the apparent mindset of the research subjects at the Bank of England. In essence, Lucy is saying that her primary objective is to establish whether or not she will make it 'to the next level' and, armed with that information, she'll decide whether to stay (and run the risk of her career 'slowing down') or leave (and increase the chances that she can continue to 'move on up'). It is interesting to note, however, that the question: 'how do you see your career developing ?' was posed in a deliberately open fashion, in order to solicit some commentary about the nature of the work Lucy might do; the degree of variety she might experience, or the degree to which she might end up doing 'interesting' jobs. However, as with questions earlier about typical careers (e.g. James) the issue of hierarchical progression dominates and provides a rather one-dimensional answer. As Keith suggested in the opening to this chapter: "if you ask somebody what they wanted to achieve in the Bank, they'd say something like: well, I want to be Official Zone 3 by the time I'm forty... all they're interested in is the rank; they're not interested in what they're doing". This speculation seems entirely appropriate if Lucy's subsequent comments are taken at face value: "I would aim to be a senior manager within the division that I'm now in".

Giles too (see below) seems only to be interested in rank: "I should be on for a Head of Divisionship in ten years. I suspect I will then plateau there... depending on how things work out, unless there's an enormous accident and I end up with a Deputy Directorship".

I should be on for a Head of Divisionship in ten years

SJA: Beyond five years or so, how do you see your longer term career developing ?

GILES: Uhm, obviously that'll depend on performance in the next few years, but in principle at least, uhm, I should be on for a Head of Divisionship in ten years. I suspect I will then plateau there... depending on how things work out, unless there's an enormous accident and I end up with a Deputy Directorship. The Bank thinks that I could go further than that. I suspect the Bank's wrong, uhm... though I'm not sort of in a rush to disillusion them as you can imagine. At the end of the day, I'm actually not a person who likes to be number one at the top of things. I like to be a sort of good team member, but always have someone to look up to, and I've got my orders and the like, and that, as I say, I suspect means I won't get to the very top, but of course I may be wrong.

The theme of prospects continues again with James (below). However, there is also an interesting twist which, in part, might explain why so many of the research subjects are apparently fixated on destination rank.

It depends on my promotion prospects

SJA: What are your expectations for the future ?

JAMES: Well, thus far, I think you could describe my career as 'career drift'. Uhm... in terms of my immediate expectations I would hope to stay where I am another two to three years. I think in a manager's job, four, five years is expected. I can see why there has to be some consistency. In two or three years I'll be 33, 34, and so my expectation would be a senior manager's position. How likely it is, I don't know.

SJA: Are you happy, to use your own phrase, to drift along for a couple of years, or are you troubled by the idea that you're not actually sure what you want to do beyond the Bank ?

JAMES: Well certainly I'm concerned that I don't know what to do. I think for the next two to three years, if I'm still in the Bank, I know what I'll be doing, and beyond that, I guess I'd have to answer that question in light of my promotion prospects at that time.

As James suggests: "I think a manager's job, four, five years is expected". He doesn't suggest why this is expected and by whom, but one senses that it is both an expectation of the Bank *and* the individual: if the individual is to continue having a career in the Bank - (which, as we have seen, fundamentally implies continuous hierarchical progression) - then certain key milestones have to be achieved; or more specifically, certain destination ranks have to be achieved by certain ages. James' subsequent comment seems to support this: "In two or three years I'll be 33, 34 and so

my expectation would be a senior manager's job". The principle of rigidly age-graded career opportunity structures is very much a feature of the old deal, and not consistent with the new deal environment where contribution and not age (or timeserve) is the determinant of career success.

I have to think about promotion, possibly next year

SJA: What does the future look like for you ? What expectations do you have ?

IAN: Well I suppose the next year or two is pretty critical for me really. Factually, I am bonded to the Bank for two years after my course, so I suppose... I'm six months into those two years. Initially my plan was, you know, to come back and do a job like I'm doing now for a year or possibly two years and then probably go on to a different area. And that's still pretty much the case. I am open minded about what to do. I suppose I could go to risk management or something like that... uhm, in the City, or do something in the public sector. The pluses behind that are almost certainly that career progression would probably be better, money would be better. I'm a Senior 1A, so it means I have to think about promotion, possibly next year or the year after, so I need to do a job where I can perform reasonably well. I suppose the obvious thing to do is to go to supervision, to prove you can do that, as a senior manager. There's a danger that you end up doing those satellite type jobs which are really interesting and rewarding, and effectively that's what I've tended to do.

This sense of pressure to keep moving 'onward and upward' is evident again in the above passage from Ian. The key point is his comment: "I'm a Senior 1A, so it means I have to think about promotion, possibly next year or the year after, so I need to do a job where I can perform reasonably well". Again, as with Lucy above, there is no consideration for the variety or interest of the role: the only preoccupation is with achieving the rank which he 'should' achieve within the expected timescale. Note also the reference to finding a role in which he can 'do well' - a prerequisite to securing, as Ian sees it, promotion to the next level.

Ian's final comment is somehow sad given its implication: "There's a danger that you end up doing those satellite jobs which are really interesting and rewarding, and effectively that's what I've tended to do". The implication, of course, is that you can either focus on how you are going (in Hugh's words) to keep 'zipping up' or you can do something interesting and rewarding. The sadness is that it appears Ian has done some interesting and rewarding jobs, but doesn't feel successful (see earlier sections) because this has clearly suboptimised his rate of progression.

It depends whether I choose my pleasure option or my career profile option

SJA: What are your career expectations for the future ? What do you think might happen, and where might you be going from this point on ?

NAOMI: At the moment I would say that, long term, I see myself in banking supervision, in some kind of senior management. I would see my next job is going to be another two to three years. I would expect after that to get some sort of decent, management responsibility, people, management, a reasonably senior manager's job in supervision. I would have expected somewhere six to eight years ? But as I say, it's partly a question of what I can get in the meantime to develop the skills to, to get there. It's very difficult to know. One of my options at the moment, which would keep me on the Bank's books, is actually to go on secondment for two or three years, but that's my pleasure option rather than the career profile option.

This theme of pleasure versus progression is illustrated again very clearly by Naomi: "One of my options at the moment, which would keep me on the Bank's books, is actually to go on secondment for two or three years, but that's my pleasure option rather than the career profile option". Again, it seems clear she would *like* to do the secondment because she'd enjoy it, but fears it might jeopardise her chances of continued career progression.

And finally, a fittingly direct response from Keith !

I'm *not* gonna do something on a promise that it'll be good for my career

SJA: What future expectations do you have ?

KEITH: I have absolutely no idea. The most important message you can pass on to the Bank is that it's no damn good talking about career policies and all the rest of it. It's all crap when people are pretty cynical. People like me. As far as I'm concerned I was treated like crap early on by the Bank and I've had to work hard to get back in favour. So what I'm interested in is what the Bank's giving me now. So, if the Bank wants me to do something else, I'll do all sorts of things. I'd be interested in managing, but there's a price, and that price has to be paid up front. I'm *not* gonna do something on a promise that it'll be good for my career. They can swivel on that. From now on, what I want to see is that if I stay in the Bank and make a move, I want it to be some move forward as I do the job, not on some promise that if I do this job it'll be good for me 'n' years down the road, because I've seen how the Bank chops and changes. I've seen how it doesn't keep its promises. So what I want now is certainty in the next career move, and so I'll be looking for something which either does me a lot of good in organisational terms, or increases my marketability outside the Bank. And if that's not forthcoming, then I'm in a great position to up and leave.

SUMMARY

In Chapter 4 it was argued that the Bank of England and IBM have, historically, shared a number of key features: a jobs for life culture, deep managerial layers, and hierarchically driven careers. However, they are also very different institutions.

As we have seen in this chapter, the Bank is a very competitive place, and its 'culture' seems to be defined by the importance of intellectual capability and continuous hierarchical progression. Thus, 'doing well' - (or more accurately, doing well versus others) - is key, as is one's status, rank or position in the hierarchy, versus others. These themes are explored in more detail in Chapter 7, where it is argued we can talk of three powerful, and context-specific discourses which influence the nature of the discursive environment in the Bank - namely 'paternalism', 'relativity' and 'velocity'.

At a more general level, it seems clear that the Bank had (at the time of the research) done very little to build a new infrastructure and vocabulary around careers and, as such, we can argue that individuals were 'struggling' to 'release' themselves from many of their seemingly deep-rooted assumptions about careers, development, progression and success. While some of the speakers show evidence of having heard the new vocabulary, and in their talk reproduce some of it, it seems much less clear that this new vocabulary has been embedded in any robust sense in speakers' discursive practices. Thus, the Bank of England subjects do not yet have at their disposal the vocabulary with which to fully make sense of the emerging reality, and thus to 'escape' the old. In short, therefore, we can argue this case study shows the emergence (at an early stage) of a 'new deal', but it is certainly not indicative of a deal which has yet become embedded.

In the next chapter, we now look at extracts of subjects' career stories in IBM, and follow a similar pattern of presentation, commentary and preliminary analysis.

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDY (2)

IBM (UK) Limited

INTRODUCTION

As outlined in Chapter 4, this chapter is designed as a presentation of extracts of the data from the main fieldwork in IBM. Throughout the chapter, passages of subjects' actual talk is presented, and commentary offered as to its meaning and possible interpretation. The wider analysis and discussion of key themes (including comparative analysis of the case studies) is presented in Chapter 7.

As also outlined in Chapter 3, the twelve interviews from which the following transcripts have been generated took place between May and July 1996. In most cases, subjects were interviewed on two separate occasions⁶⁹, with a transcript being produced immediately following the first interview, and thus allowing for both a preliminary analysis of the data and the production of follow-up questions for the second interviews. However, the total body of interview materials has been treated, essentially, as one data set, and so the data in this chapter is not presented in a manner as to artificially separate that set. To ensure the reader has the appropriate context, however, in each case the researcher's questions are also presented.

In this chapter, the data are presented under seven headings which, taken together, chart the telling of subjects' career stories:

- What is a career ?
- Expectations on entry
- Changing expectations
- Changes in IBM and their implications
- Typical careers
- Success
- Looking ahead

⁶⁹ In two cases (Wendy and Gary) a second interview was not possible in the timeframe necessary to complete the main part of the fieldwork in this organisation.

It is important to note that while all interviews in both case study organisations were conducted with reference to the same basic interview schedule, different questions were posed at times as the similarities and differences in organisational context emerged. As discussed in Chapter 3, this is entirely in the spirit of the contextualist-interpretivist approach. Since no claims are being made here as to the generalisability of the findings of this research outwith the contexts in which the research was conducted, there is limited (if indeed any) merit in presenting subjects in two different organisations with precisely the same discursive stimuli. Indeed, following Potter & Wetherell (1987) it is only through the examination of both consistency *and* variability that a persuasive (and 'useful') reading of the data can be produced. It follows, therefore, that while Chapters 5 and 6 both speak largely to the same key themes which will be discussed in Chapter 7, this coming chapter reads a little differently to its predecessor.

As in Chapter 5, the following passages provide a contextual reference point for this case study. That is, they provide an orientation to both the nature of subjects' talk, and some of the themes which will resonate through this chapter.

Thus, we hear first from William about the importance of being a manager in order to leverage one's potential for career success; how, under the old deal, "everyone had their little place to be" and, thus, it was easy to determine what one had to do to 'get on'; and how he, like many others (as we will see) was 'seduced' in the early stages of his IBM career into thinking that 'being a manager' was what he wanted. Second, we hear about Phillipa's indecision over whether to follow a technical or non-technical career path and, in particular, her struggle to determine the 'right route' which would not only get her to where she thinks she wants to be, but would also engender the full support of the company. And, third, we hear from Alan about his lack of career planning and, as a result, the way in which his career has 'trundled along'. This extract illustrates that, although the new deal in IBM is much further embedded than was the case in the Bank of England (as will be seen), not everyone is seemingly 'buying into' the new deal in the same way. We thus need to understand more fully how different people are responding in different ways, and thus constructing very different careers and identities as a consequence.

(Note: as in Chapter 5, unlike the remainder of this chapter, these three extracts are presented without commentary, in order to allow the data to 'speak for itself').

To be a manager

SJA: Why did you join IBM ?

WILLIAM: I wanted to be in programming; I was good at it. I had a flair for it. It was the sort of work I wanted to do, and the best starting salary. It was a big company. Everybody had their role to play. Everyone had their little place to be. It would be very easy to see what my responsibilities were; very compartmentalised, and as long as I could get my head round what I'd be doing, I could get on. It was a very straight job: you do this, it's very challenging, well paid, and prospects are good. You do this for two to four years, and then you move on. And the fact that it was IBM; at the time IBM came with a job for life guaranteed, unless you were caught with your hand in the till. I found the security attractive. I didn't like taking risks. So, here's a company offering me more money than anyone else, an implicit job for life, a job I wanted to do, and under the sort of conditions I wanted to work in.

SJA: What were your career goals ?

WILLIAM: When people asked me, the only thing I could think of was management. I'd hit on the right button. To get on anywhere in IBM and have influence you had to have been a manager. I wanted the influence, the stripes, the kudos, enormous wealth and the flash car. I spent a large part of my early career telling people: yes, management's where I wanna go; its where I wanna be.

SJA: Why was management the goal ?

WILLIAM: It seemed to me an organisation needs people to tell it what to do, and the person who tells the organisation what to do is the person at the top, and that passes down as a series of instructions or directives to the rank and file. So, if I wanted to have any responsibility and influence over where IBM was going, the way to do that was to go through the management chain as quickly as possible. You had to jump through that hoop. Management was the only place I saw where you could have influence. It seemed to me that the only way to get significant progression was to go up the management chain. Was that really where I felt I needed to be ? That's another point. Did I walk into that organisation as a born manager ? That certainly isn't true. The environment shaped me; it seduced me into thinking that was the direction I should go in. It was more about the progression. I couldn't see any other way; that's what it boiled down to.

I'm *still* uhmring and aahing

SJA: Where do you think your career is heading ?

PHILLIPA: I need to speak to my manager and career manager and see what they think they perceive IBM think is the best route.

SJA: What difference does it make what the company thinks ?

PHILLIPA: It's all about what role they'll give you next. If they think you're doing well and you're going down the right route, then they're more likely to hear you and help you. Whereas if you haven't done what they thought, and you're lower in the rankings, or you haven't moved into the positions they want, then you'll just be put where there are spaces available. If it's OK to stay technical, if I say I want to be technical, and they see that's the right thing to do, then they'll probably help. But if it's the wrong thing, I think they'll just start putting up barriers... not barriers... but it'll be more of a struggle to get what you want. And because I'm kind of in a dilemma of knowing what I do want... Most people seem to have a: I definitely want to go for this route... I think it's quite unusual to be still uhmring and aahing: do I want to be technical, do I not want to be technical ? Probably because I'm not

a real technical person, I'm not extremely technical, if I go that route I'm worried that I won't be able to cope. But, at the same time, if I go the other way, will I miss the technical aspects ?

SJA: How far ahead into the future are you looking ? Have you got a longer term, strategic view of your career ?

PHILLIPA: I suppose I can only ever seem to look at the next position I'm aiming for, like business analyst, and the other is like being this career technologist. And I see that in the next couple of years, I will be able to achieve this. I'm not sure how long they expect me to be in this project leading role. They will always say, whatever career you decide, that's fine, IBM supports that. It's just the sort of cynic in me, reading between the lines and underneath thinking, no, it's not quite true. There's still something that's seen as the right thing to do, and something that's: no, you've missed the boat now; you've had your go and you've refused it.

The reluctant careerist

SJA: Are there any final comments you'd like to make ?

ALAN: Perhaps I can end by summarising my attitude toward career planning so far. It's largely happened by accident, but that's because it's progressed in a way that's satisfactory to me. If I had ended up doing a job I didn't like I'd have done something about it. But the jobs I have been doing have agreed with me. I've progressed satisfactorily. I've let my career, such as it is, progress rather lazily.

SJA: So, have your career objectives remained constant ?

ALAN: Yes, moved from fairly nebulous, to, less nebulous. My career so far has been characterised by no significant changes. All my job changes so far have been fairly smooth, no significant step, essentially the same job throughout. Quite stable.

SJA: Have there been any key events or turning points in your career ?

ALAN: No, not really, there haven't. It's sort of trundled along. I suppose I've let it trundle, because it's trundled satisfactorily. There have been no major points where I've decided I needed to take a new direction. I suppose the only slightly major point being that I've realised I am destined to be a technical person. I suppose it was a gradual realisation, about three years ago. I suppose one day I realised. I feel that I'm going to keep getting job satisfaction, and sacrifice some things like level, prestige, money, that sort of thing.

As outlined earlier, the above passages have served to provide a general orientation to the nature of the data which is to be presented in this chapter, and to some of the key themes which run through subsequent passages of talk. In the following sections, we now turn to a variety of detailed extracts of subject's talk around these themes.

WHAT IS A CAREER ?

Throughout this chapter we see a variety of evidence that the IBM research subjects are drawing on a rich and diverse vocabulary. This, we could argue, is a key point of difference between the discursive contexts of the two case study organisations. While

in both organisations there is clearly a discourse of betterment which imbues subjects' talk, bringing with it a view of career which is essentially about hierarchical progression over time, it is notable in the talk of the IBM subjects that such progression is the *ultimate* objective, and not necessarily the essential feature of each job move. Thus, whereas in the previous chapter subjects talked of the importance at every stage of relative success in what is clearly a competitive environment, the emphasis in IBM seems to be more on a 'journey' in the direction of ultimate success. This, we might argue, is not only an artefact of a different organisational context, but is also a result of the relative success IBM has achieved in re-positioning the notion of career in the discursive repertoires of its employees by, quite literally, introducing new ways of talking about careers. These themes are illustrated in the following passages.

A career is a journey, with direction and goals

SJA: What does 'career' mean ?

WENDY: Getting what I want out of my daily job.

SJA: Is there a difference between a career and a job ?

WENDY: A job is something I do nine to five. With a career you've got a plan: I'm here now, and this is where I'm heading. This how I expect to travel. You have a route in your mind, a direction, some goals.

In this first passage, Wendy provides an interesting distinction between 'job' and 'career'. As she says: "a job is something I do nine to five" whereas a career involves "a plan". As she goes on to illustrate, for her a career is about a journey, a route, a destination: "how I expect to travel". It is also clearly about the passage of time - a journey from a point in the present to 'somewhere' in the future. Whether or not this journey ever leads to a specific final destination, however, is, perhaps, a moot point, but there is already here an interesting potential difference in the reported nature of career in the two case study organisations - i.e. in the Bank, expectations are realised on the attainment of destination rank, but in IBM there is the possibility that the notion of 'journey' sets up an expectation which can never be fully realised. (Note the absence in Wendy's talk about destination role or rank - the talk is about 'heading' toward 'some goals', not about 'arriving').

A career is a pathway to increased prosperity

SJA: What is a career ?

FRED: A career as opposed to a job ? A job is an element in a career. A career is a succession of jobs leading to a goal. A career is something to an extent you plan. It's like a strategy. It's progression.

There's a start point, and at the end point obviously you retire, but between those two points you don't just do a job. You're not a bus driver, full stop. You start off as a bus driver, then you get to be a head bus driver, then you get to be head head bus driver. You know, there's progression, you get promoted, and there's salary increases as opposed to a job where, you know, you're a bus driver, that's it, and then you retire. The jobs I've done in the past were, literally, I've got to pay the rent. Whereas to me a career is short, medium, long term goals. You have some sort of a plan formulated where this is just a temporary stepping stone to the next best...to another level. A career is like a continuous string of maybe separate jobs, but it's more planned, more cohesive in terms of, there'll be sideward steps, sometimes downward steps, but it's a pathway to a goal if you like of increased prosperity, more responsibility, more challenges and so on, more status in a role in a company and so on. You don't just stumble along blindly hoping luck will take control. I want to reach an end point. Am I going to reach my full potential ? I want to do better. How can I do better ? It's not a case of blindly stumbling, it's a case of finding a path, pushing to reach a goal. I do think: here I am, and here's where I want to be.

In this second passage, Fred also draws immediate attention to the distinction between a job and a career: "A job is an element in a career. A career is a succession of jobs..." This is a surprisingly clear and simple distinction and, in contrast to speakers' responses to similar questions in the previous chapter, is notably free of any immediate reference to status. Like Wendy, Fred also refers to the importance of planning and strategy - i.e. a career (unlike a job ?) is not something which one engages in passively: it requires an *active* commitment to the attainment of the goal - "you don't just stumble along blindly hoping luck will take control".

However, as Fred goes on, career is not just about a vague notion of a 'journey of betterment', rather there are some very tangible objectives in making a commitment to such a journey, the first being 'progression'. As Fred suggests: "There's a start point, and at the end point obviously you retire, but between those two points you don't just do a job". As he goes on, progression, promotion, and salary increases are all part of the deal as you move from bus driver to head bus driver to head head bus driver.

As the remainder of Fred's talk shows, many different metaphors are being drawn upon in order to illustrate what he means by career: "[a job] is just a temporary stepping stone to the next best... to another level"; "a career is like a continuous string of maybe separate jobs"; "it's a pathway to a goal... of increased prosperity".

A career is your route through a company

SJA: What is a career ?

VIRGINIA: It's actually uhm... I'll take some time to think about it... A career is your route through a company, or whatever, to achieve certain aims, whatever those aims are that you have set yourself, your own goals in your career, and the career is where you are progressing and you're continually

developing, in an area in which you've chosen - well, not necessarily chosen, but it sometimes... it happens by accident that you end up in a career - where you feel you are developing and also contributing to the company. Uhm, that would probably be how I saw a career, where you are actually trying to achieve some goal that you set yourself, over a period of time. A career isn't something that's a two year event. It's actually a long term, a long term goal that you're trying to achieve. I think there's a difference between a job and a career. A job is a mechanism for earning money. There are many, many jobs. It's a means of using your time which will hopefully come back with some financial reward... Now, a job could be... the sort of jobs I've done in the past are, I've been a chambermaid, I've been a waitress. Those are what I'd classify as jobs I've had. My view of a job is just to get money. A career... I wasn't going to make a career out of waitressing. I wasn't going to make a career out of chambermaiding. They were simply a means of earning some money. But in IBM, when I joined, there was a potential for a career. Within a career you may perform many different roles, and hopefully you'll get some career satisfaction. You can get a certain level of satisfaction as a waitress: are the customers all happy? But it's very repetitive. A job in my terms is something that's repetitive, doesn't necessarily have any form of development, doesn't have any great future attached to it. It will be the same role, three years' time, five years' time, eight years' time potentially. Yes the clients may have changed, it might be a different restaurant, it might be a different number of people you're looking after, but it's still pretty much the same. A career is about progression *and* development.

In the above passage Virginia, like Fred, uses a range of images - (draws on a variety of interpretative repertoires) - to explain what she means by career. Thus she talks of a career offering continuous personal development, as well as an opportunity to make a contribution to the company. She also makes reference to the career as a vehicle for the attainment of a goal, over time: "You are actually trying to achieve some goal that you've set for yourself, over a period of time. A career isn't something that's a two year event".

Virginia also makes a clear distinction between a job and a career, when she describes a job as a mechanism for earning money; something very repetitive; something which offers no scope for development, no future attached to it: "It will be the same role, three years' time, five years' time, eight years' time potentially". As she says: "I wasn't going to make a career out of waitressing or chambermaiding" - to her, these were merely a series of jobs she performed in exchange for financial gain. However, when she joined IBM, she says she saw there was "potential for a career" - an opportunity to perform many roles and to gain job satisfaction. Thus, she concludes: "A career is about progression *and* development".

While the previous passages illustrate the breadth and richness of speakers' apparent understandings of career - (or the range of interpretative repertoires upon which they are drawing to construct their talk) - the final comment from Virginia does seem to

allude to the underlying *raison d'être* of the 'journeys' which she, Fred and Wendy have committed to, namely progression. This theme is nicely illustrated by Thomas.

Vertical progression *must* be the ultimate aim

SJA: Does career progression mean vertical progression ?

THOMAS: No, but ultimately it would be. I'd be happy to move sideways, but sideways moves lead to vertical moves. I think I am quite status motivated.

SJA: What about lateral career progression ?

THOMAS: But the ultimate aim of doing that must be vertical progression.

SJA: Why ?

THOMAS: The money, and when you're making the bigger, more important decisions, it becomes more interesting.

It is interesting to consider Thomas' response to the question as to whether career progression, by definition, means vertical progression. His answer is, effectively, 'No... but, then again, yes'. As his subsequent comments show, he appears to some extent to be in touch with the 'new deal' principle of lateral career progression, and he claims he would be happy to make 'sideways' moves (a distinctly 'new deal' notion). However, as he suggests: "the ultimate aim of doing that would be vertical progression". When asked why, he suggests that increasing seniority brings with it more money and increased decision-making responsibility, and thus it is more 'interesting'. In other words, like Giles (Chapter 5), there seems to be an underlying assumption that vertical progression, *per se*, is important - (and one's concerns with it are legitimised) - since, without it, careers simply wouldn't be 'interesting'.

EXPECTATIONS ON ENTRY

As in Chapter 5, the question: "what were your career expectations ?" is a very broad question which, we might suggest, should yield some commentary about the nature or variety of the roles individuals thought they might take on during their time in IBM. However, as in Chapter 5 where we frequently saw speakers interpret this question as a question about ultimate success (e.g. destination rank), here we see speakers interpreting the question in the context of the attainment of managerial status (a subtly different issue).

In interviews I used to say: I want to be in management

SJA: When you joined IBM, what were your career expectations ?

PHILLIPA: I think in interviews I may have said I wanted to be in management. They always have that question: where do you see yourself in five years' time ? So it seemed to me that the answer would be to show that you were interested in moving up, to say that's where you wanted to go, otherwise if you didn't say it they would think, well you're not that career-minded, maybe you're not going to try to achieve and get up to the next level. Whereas really, inside, I was quite happy to stay technical. But it was like, you just know they're after... if they said: where do you want to be in five years' time and I'd said I see myself programming, well that isn't quite accepted. So, if I did say it, I probably said it thinking that was what you needed to say to get a job, while really thinking I had no intention of doing that. It depends who was asking the question. I can empathise with why people want to be managers. I think managers are there to help, and to help others achieve what they want to achieve. Now, managers have two roles, to help people through their careers, and to get the job done.

In this passage, we see Phillipa reporting a classic undergraduate response to the classic milkround question about future aspirations. As she says, "it seemed to me that the answer would be to show that you were interested in moving up... to say that's where you wanted to go". As she goes on, not to provide this answer might have suggested to her potential employers she was not ambitious or, as she puts it, "career-minded". The question here, perhaps, is why she claims she felt it important to create this impression of ambition, particularly when, as she later declares, "I was quite happy to stay technical". The answer, perhaps, is that under the terms of the old deal (pre-restructuring and downsizing) it was important in IBM to be *seen* to be ambitious. (The irony, of course, is that five years on the 'specialisation' model is now seen to be much more acceptable, and so by remaining in programming Phillipa is arguably in a much better position to add real value to the firm and thus, ultimately, be more 'successful' in her career).

On a different theme, Phillipa's final comments are somewhat curious. In claiming she can empathise with people who want to be managers, she simultaneously seems to point up her lack of understanding of what managers actually do. Quite reasonably, she suggests that a predisposition to helping people is a good reason, for some, to be a manager. However, her comments imply that, in the past, the role of the IBM manager was to "help others achieve what they want to achieve", whereas now they also have to "get the job done". It is thus interesting she implies that managers were not accountable under the terms of the 'old deal' - or, perhaps it is that, more literally, a discourse of accountability was not a feature of the discursive environment under the terms of the old deal, and thus was not 'spoken of' and embedded through individuals' routine discursive practices.

In the next passage, Bruce is also alluding to the desire to become a line manager, a goal he seems to have set for himself some time after joining the company. The interesting point here is his talk of balance, and how he perceives that a first line manager (as opposed to a second line, more senior manager) would be able to manage his workload and meet his commitments without compromising his personal time. This is a theme which recurs several times in this chapter (e.g. William and Orla below), though with one exception (Sally) was entirely absent in Chapter 5. (This issue is discussed further in Chapter 7).

My goal was to get to a first line manager position

SJA: You said that when you joined IBM you were thinking in 'career' terms.....

BRUCE:not when I first arrived, but over time, six months or a year, you get to know who's who and the relative responsibilities. I guess my goal was to get to a first line manager position. That balance of responsibilities and workload and commitment, with the amount of time that would be free to the individual, seemed to me at that time was about what I was comfortable with. In my mind, people above that were expected to live and breathe the company to such an extent they wouldn't have a life of their own. It was very black and white. First line manager is, to me, the first step on the card holding manager line. You could get away with not working fifty, sixty hour weeks and still have the weekend to yourself. I didn't have any ideas of how quickly I'd get there at that time, but fairly soon I consciously made the decision not to aggressively push my career in what I would term 'the early years' because at that time I got very involved in playing volleyball to national standard, and I wanted the flexibility to go away on tournaments, and in the evenings I wanted not to be thinking about work. But I made the effort to get the skills I would need later on, like organisational skills: I organised a volleyball tournament, for example. So I was conscious I wasn't progressing as fast as some of my peers, but I accepted that as my choice. It's quite satisfying that I've caught up with most of them since.

Bruce's later comments are also interesting from two perspectives. First, the phrase: "First line manager is, to me, the first step on the card holding manager line" is clearly an allusion to the managerial career ladder, and it is also clear that Bruce sees the attainment of a first line manager position as - to continue the metaphor - a significant step. Second, his talk of not "aggressively" pushing his career is interesting. Clearly, he claims to have had other interests at the time which would have been disrupted had he needed to work fifty or sixty hours a week (which is what he seems to be saying second line managers have to do). Whether or not this is 'true', of course, is a mute point, but what Bruce's comment implies, once again, is an enduring or resilient view of career as being about vertical progression. Thus, his decision, it seems, was aimed at reducing his 'career velocity', and thus slowing down the rate at which he made further, significant steps *up* the ladder. While Bruce has since, apparently, "caught

up" with his peers, he claims at the time to have accepted, as his choice, that he would not progress (up the ladder ?) "as fast as some of my peers".

There is something important about saying you're an IBM manager

SJA: Before you entered the world of work, did you have a clear idea of what you wanted from your career ?

URSULA: Not really. I was one of these unfortunate people with a conscience, so I didn't know whether I wanted to go into industry or business. I had two job offers; one from IBM and the other from the RNIB - and this was the one I took in the end, for the financial security. The only theme that went through school and university was that, in the longer term, I wanted to do whatever I needed to do to move towards some type of management job and/or some type of consultancy. Now, I had no idea of how I was going to get there, so I didn't really have any expectations for how the first few years would go, other than I've always liked to do things that will build skill and experience. I was intent in making sure that happened. I think when you're at university, consultancy sounds good, although you don't know what it means. In terms of management, a lot about the topic I studied at university I was interested in because I enjoyed doing the various assignments. That was also where my skills seemed to lie: working with people, communication. So, it's a number of things. In terms of consultancy, a number of things, and that theme will continue I guess. Ultimately, it holds for me a flexible work pattern that is quite attractive, perhaps a work pattern I've got more say in, and I can drive in the directions I want it to go. It's part about solving a problem, but more to do with helping a person solve a problem, rather than having a logical problem to sort out in my head. I like working with people to help them resolve situations. And in terms of the management thing, I never really knew whether I wanted to manage people or projects, and so for the early part of my IBM career I moved towards things that would help me decide between those two things, and it's fallen very much on the people side.

SJA: Did you have any clear ideas about money, power, status, the level you might rise to... that sort of thing ?

URSULA: Having always been somebody that likes to achieve, I can't say that it wasn't there at all, but it's never been a primary motivator. It's not as though I want to get to a certain place in the organisation. I like to feel that I'm being rewarded for what I'm doing. I wouldn't say I'd take a job because it gave me an extra 20k just because it gave me an extra 20k. But there *is* something in there about status, in terms of *saying* that you're an IBM manager. You get a different type of information, different view of the organisation, an input to the organisation, and that gives you a status.

One of the key issues we turn to in Chapter 7 is the contextual importance of attaining a managerial position or, as Ursula suggests, *saying* you're a manager: "there *is* something in there about status, in terms of saying that you're an IBM manager. You get a different type of information, different view of the organisation, an input to the organisation, and that gives you a status". However, other aspects of Ursula's talk here are particularly interesting at this point.

As we see, Ursula reports a very clear career expectation: "I wanted to do whatever I needed to do to move towards some type of management job and/or some type of consultancy". The question is: why is she constructing her talk in this fashion ? Her claim is as follows: "I think when you're at university, consultancy sounds good, although you don't know what it means. In terms of management, a lot about the topic I studied at university I was interested in because I enjoyed doing the various assignments. That was also where my skills seemed to lie". If we accept that Ursula had done a great deal of careers research while at university, and thus her reported expectation is 'genuine', her comment would make sense. However, as we have seen earlier, here and in Chapter 5, this would be quite unusual. We therefore need to be careful not to treat Ursula's comments too transparently, but instead look to her subsequent talk to see what might be influencing this particular construction, and what effect she may be attempting to bring off with her talk.

She goes on to say: "I've always liked to do things that will build skill and experience". This comment appears in stark contrast to many of her peers (who talk instead about the attainment of a managerial position) and, more starkly, is of a wholly different character to the talk we saw from subjects in the previous chapter. As with much of the talk in the IBM case study, we might thus legitimately wonder whether this particular construction is, instead, something of a post-rationalisation of the 'reality' of Ursula's experience and expectations, or instead an attempt to reconstruct her view of her past career in order to make sense of the present. That is, the concept of "building skill and experience" is, as we have seen, very much part of the vocabulary of the *new* deal in IBM, not that of the old, and therefore is unlikely to have constituted an interpretative repertoire available to Ursula at that particular point in time. We could, therefore, argue that this is direct evidence of both the appropriation of a new vocabulary and, simultaneously, an illustration of the process by which careers and identities are reconstructed. Ursula's subsequent comments seem to bear this out.

For example, first: "Ultimately, it holds for me a flexible work pattern that is quite attractive , perhaps a work pattern I've got more say in, and I can drive in the directions I want it to go" (the concept of 'flexible work patterns' is, again, very much part of the *new* deal; as is the rhetoric of 'driving' one's own career). Second: "in terms of the management thing, I never really knew whether I wanted to manage people or projects, and so for the early part of my IBM career I moved towards things that would help me decide between those two things" (the distinction between 'those two things' - managing people or managing projects - is a distinction which significantly

post-dates Ursula's entry to IBM and, as we saw in Chapter 4, was a response by the company to the collapse of the old deal *following* downsizing and restructuring).

Ursula's third comment is, perhaps, even more interesting: "It's not as though I want to get to a certain place in the organisation". While, of course, we can acknowledge that people are different, and thus this comment *may* indicate a difference in attitude or motivation, it would seem somehow odd if we were hearing this in a discursive context still imbued with the language of the old deal. The 'reality', however, is that by the time of this research, IBM staff had been told - (many times over and in inter-textually different ways) - that a career in the company is no longer about rising through the hierarchy to get to a specific 'destination job', rather it is about amassing skills which customers will 'buy'. Thus again, we are drawn, at this stage, to the (tentative) conclusion that we must be witnessing the appropriation of new discourse here, and thus the effect Ursula is trying to bring off with their talk is, literally, to reconstruct her identity in ways which are more congruent with what she sees (and hears) is the 'dawning reality' around her.

We shall, of course, return later to this important theme.

CHANGING EXPECTATIONS

Thus far we have seen illustrations of the importance of being 'an IBM manager'; and of the difficulties in making important career decisions as between following a technical or non-technical career route. We have also seen very rich definitions of career and, indeed, distinctions between job and career: (more so than was the case in the previous chapter). This might serve to indicate of itself the embedding of a new careers discourse in IBM. In addition, we have seen tentative evidence to support the hypothesis that when subjects become sensitive to, and begin to appropriate, this 'new' language, they literally engage in a process of reconstructing their careers and identities. When we look at how expectations are reported to have changed over time, and how the changes in IBM have impacted careers, we begin to see more clearly these process of engagement and reconstruction.

I saw what it meant to be a manager

SJA: Over time, did your career expectations change ?

ORLA: I guess I was a little naive at college. I didn't get much direction from my careers teacher at school, so I just did things I liked, and perhaps I thought there weren't that many opportunities around.

I'd seen myself going into management. But they stopped recruiting into management, and I saw what it meant to be a manager; the downsides of the job. I therefore started looking around, and got quite interested in PCs; quite challenging. I decided I would go for a technical career, which probably set me back a couple of years. I think if I were to leave IBM and go work for another employer they would be quite interested as to why, you know, it would seem a bit of an odd move to start off in an admin type role and go into a technical one after five years. My perception is that if I was going for another technical job they would expect a bit more of a progressive career with a technical subject; probably a perception of someone's competency. Someone might look at that and say: OK, you've got ten years' experience of working but only five of those are relevant to me. I think a lot of people expect that you know where you're going in a career. People might look at the CV and think: this is a bit chequered; this girl doesn't seem particularly to have known what she's wanted so she's just stayed here for five years and then thought: oh, I'll give this a go. And that's the thing that worries me. People would think: OK, you've been working for nine years but, first five, forget it.

In earlier sections in this chapter we saw people claim a particular interest in becoming a manager. However, as Orla tells us, she made something of a career shift, and decided instead to pursue a technical career. She claims this decision was precipitated by two issues: first, that the company "stopped recruiting into management" and second, she saw what it meant to be a manager: "the downsides of the job". As with Ursula in the previous section, we *could* take Orla's comments at face value and accept that, on the one hand, opportunities to move into management were somewhat limited (given restructuring and downsizing) and/or, on the other, that she didn't feel the personal sacrifices she might need to make to become a manager were worth it. It is difficult to tell from the passage because we are given few clues, but these themes would be consistent with comments made by others earlier. However, the brevity of Orla's comments on this point do raise doubt as to the 'real' reason she switched career paths. It may be that, like William (see below), she did not feel she had the attributes to be a manager, and thus it no longer makes sense for her to aspire to a managerial position.

Other aspects of Orla's talk are interesting, in particular her comment that the decision to follow a technical career "probably set me back a couple of years". She seems to be concerned that, having five years in an administrative role - (on a managerial career track) - belies the fact that she didn't really know what she wanted to do, and thus she has not been able to show "progressive" development in a technical capacity. This may be a legitimate concern, but in any case seems to indicate a deeply-held assumption about what careers *should* be, namely a 'journey' with a purpose: "I think a lot of people expect that you know where you're going in a career".

The door was closing

SJA: You said earlier that when you joined IBM you wanted to be a manager, but you later said you'd decided not to do that. What changed your mind ?

WILLIAM: It was a gradual realisation, or maybe a gradual acceptance of something I always believed, which was that I didn't have the right attributes to be a manager. At my interview, there was an implicit acceptance that I could be a manager, and for the first three years of my career everyone said: yeh, you can do that; you've got a lot to learn, but you can do that. I did a course after about four years in IBM - The Customer Service Development Programme – and we were analysed for a week, and at the end of it they gave us advice as to what we should be doing. We were told we could be either highly technical or a manager. I was told I could do anything. So I was never told where I would be; it was up to me. I wanted the fame and glory of management but deep down I didn't think I had the ability. But I became more prepared to believe other people who said I could do it. Did I want to sit behind a big desk in a big office ? No. What I wanted was the influence, and the kudos that comes with it. It took me a long time to reconcile that conflict. I always knew I didn't have what it took, but I became accustomed to the fact that I wasn't going to do it. I was doing it for all the wrong reasons. People were saying: you can do this, but I wasn't sure. But if somebody had offered it me, I'd have taken it. I was the first CS person to become a salesman. I passed, and got the kudos and influence. I realised this is where I could influence, not through management, and so I switched career paths. I never really felt I had the attributes for management, but people kept telling me I did. But they weren't coming up with the goods. So I realised then that I obviously wasn't demonstrating the attributes. The management door was being closed; I'd been in IBM seven years by then. If I was going to have a career in management, it would have happened by then.

In the previous passage, we saw a suggestion that Orla may not have felt she had the attributes to become a manager, and while that is not a stated reason for her decision to change career paths, it nevertheless seems plausible. In the above passage William seems more explicit on the point. He claims that while others told him he could, effectively, do anything (i.e. be technical or be a manager) he gradually came to realise something he claims he had always believed: "I didn't have the right attributes to be a manager".

Again, it would be easy to accept at face value what William is claiming, but for three comments. First: "Did I want to sit behind a big desk in a big office ? No. What I wanted was the influence and the kudos that comes with it". This is, arguably, another example of the rhetoric of the new deal emerging since, historically, it has been very clear that in order to achieve any influence in IBM, one *had* to be a manager - as William himself suggested in the opening to this chapter. Second: "I was doing it for all the wrong reasons". Presumably this is a reference not to the pursuit of influence (which would be legitimate) but to the pursuit of "fame and glory" as William puts it. This is somewhat curious, not least since, again, in the earlier passage William seems quite clear what he wants to achieve: "the stripes, the kudos, enormous wealth and the

flash car". There is, thus, a sense in this talk that these are indeed the things William is still interested in, but by appropriating the new messages he is hearing, he is in the process of convincing himself (and us) that this was not his intention all along. The third comment seems to illustrate the point very clearly: "if somebody had offered it me, I'd have taken it" - why ? because as he says, 'underneath' his own rhetoric, he wanted the fame and glory.

In the two passages above we have seen that Orla and William appear to have made quite fundamental career decisions, and no longer claim to be in pursuit of a career in management. We have also seen that while their claims are perhaps plausible, there is an alternative reading, namely that we are seeing in these passages individuals engaged in the process of unravelling what they really do think. In a similar vein, the same could be said of Patrick below.

I'm wondering where my career's going

SJA: Did your expectations change over time ?

PATRICK: Well, I think quickly you get an idea of what you can expect: certainly you get an idea of what jobs you might be able to do, within your own group, in the immediate area. There were jobs I could be doing in a few years' time, and it was clear to see what they might be, and so your expectations get aligned with the group you're in. It was never obvious what other jobs were available outside my immediate area. Obviously there are going to be barriers between various different parts of the organisation.

SJA: How long did it take for you to figure out the opportunities ?

PATRICK: A few months I guess. I've made a slow and steady progress. I've followed the slow, steady path, but I'm wondering where my career's going right now. It seems that AD is seen as an area that doesn't have much future; it's a low end skill. About two years ago I tried to much more consciously direct a career into what I thought was an interesting area, and the specialism I chose was object orientation. That's an area that's beginning to take off, and I suspect will take off some more. So I started to specialise a bit and become more useful to people outside AD. A lot of people in AD I think are just regarded as a number. I'd much rather be a person: yes I'd like Patrick because he did this before, and he's got these skills, and we could use that sort of a person. You need to differentiate yourself. I'm not an expert yet; I'm still a number.

As Patrick suggests, he has followed what may, traditionally, have been regarded as "the slow, steady path" (from junior programmer to senior programmer), but now he is wondering where his career is heading. Why is this the case ? It seems, from his later comments that as the careers environment is changing around him his previously quite insular perspective - ("your expectations get aligned with the group you're in") - is being challenged. Four key elements of his later talk suggest a process of

reconstruction, namely the reference to skills, usefulness to people, differentiation, and expertise.

As Patrick comments: "It seems that AD is seen as an area that doesn't have much future; it's a low end skill". As we saw in Chapter 3, this has not always been the case, and indeed it is arguable whether Patrick's assertion is an accurate reflection of the reality of the AD environment - in any computer company the size of IBM, internal application development capability is, surely, a core competence. The interesting point, therefore, is Patrick's reference to AD being "a low end skill". We could argue this is a reference to the emerging dialogue around skill development, and the assertion of one of the sponsors in Chapter 3 that career development in IBM is now about the skills customers will buy. Perhaps Patrick feels that, internally, the skills of application development do not have as much cache as other more 'valuable' skills. This being the case, his comment might be seen as evidence of engagement in this discourse. As he goes on: "So I started to specialise a bit and become more useful to people outside AD... I'd much rather be a person: yes I'd like Patrick because he did this before, and he's got these skills". These comments seem to suggest an increasing awareness of the need to develop skills which both internal and external 'customers' would find useful, to the point at which he becomes a 'preferred supplier' of these skills. As he suggests: "You need to differentiate yourself".

Finally, Patrick's comment: "I'm not an expert yet; I'm still a number" can be read in two ways, but either way both readings add up to the same point. That is, Patrick clearly sees he has a task to continuously develop his skills, and thus to position himself effectively in the internal market. In other words, expertise 'sells'. The other reading is that this is an explicit reference to the Worldwide Professions, since the ultimate attainment, having built up a strong skillset, is to become a certified Expert. Therefore, again, we could argue this is evidence of an active engagement in the emerging rhetoric/new discourse.

In the final passage in this section, Bruce illustrates another dimension of engagement in the 'dawning reality' which is beginning to characterise IBM, namely the consequences of restructuring. The impression we get from Bruce is that, under the terms of the old deal, loyalty and doing a good job (as we have seen earlier) were sufficient to guarantee a job until one reached an age or stage in one's career where one's future contributions might likely diminish. However, as Bruce reports, seeing people lose their jobs "shifted the emphasis a lot". The conclusion he seems to have come to is that he needs to "continually strive" to improve himself. This is a core message of the new deal.

I started thinking about losing my job: that puts a different emphasis on things

SJA: Can you explain to me the process of change in your expectations over time ?

BRUCE: The thing that brought it home was the round of voluntary separations that IBM went through four or five years ago, certainly the very last one where the people who were given the opportunity were, I thought, and they thought... they were doing a good enough job. And I know there was some bitter feeling in those people who were saying: well, I've given IBM a lot of my career and I'd been achieving something, and then IBM turned around and says: well, yes you are, but here's the package. I think that a lot of people in my area took the package because they were insulted about being offered it. But it did drive home the point that the previous package had gone to people who'd been perceived as at the end of their careers. It shifted the emphasis a lot, and it got pretty close to the point of me being offered the package from the point of view of years in the company, and age. I think, from that point of view, I started thinking about my job disappearing, and so that put a different emphasis on the career.

SJA: Did that make you more ambitious in a way, seeing a lot of people going... did you think: this creates more opportunities now ?

BRUCE: No, I didn't see it like that at all. It was much more the case of fear of losing your job, and if I don't continually strive to improve myself etcetera etcetera, then there's a good chance I'm going to be in the next package. And I know a lot of other people felt that way too.

CHANGES IN IBM (AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS)

In the following four main sections of this chapter we look at subjects' accounts (stories) about the changes they have witnessed in IBM in recent years and the implications of those changes on careers; at individuals' changing views of the typical IBM career; and at assumptions around the construct of success. If the preceding arguments about individuals' active participation in the reconstruction of careers holds 'true', then in these sections we would expect to see clear evidence of the interplay between the discourses of the old and new, since this is, arguably, rich and fertile territory in which to reveal a 'struggle' between competing discourses.

In this first passage, Bruce begins by telling us how he sees a significant decrease in the amount of contact he is now able to have with more senior people. As a result, he suggests, his managers don't understand what he does on a day to day basis. More fundamentally, perhaps, he tells us that: "You lose that link between what you're doing now and what you're gonna be doing in a year's time". In other words, to build on the definitions of career offered by others earlier in the chapter, what Bruce is alluding to, perhaps literally, is the loss of a sense of career: the loss of an ability to look at what he is doing in a continuous, chronological sense, and thus to project that logic onto a vision of his future career.

I preferred things the way they were - in the 'old IBM'

SJA: Thinking about changes in the company in the last 3-5 years, let's say, how would you summarise those changes ?

BRUCE: How do I see the changes ? I think the impact is a lot more at the higher management level. There's certainly a lot less contact with people. I see my unit manager once a quarter for an hourly chat, and that's about it. I think when I joined I used to see my first line manager once a month, I think, and that would have been the same for everybody. They would have had an understanding of what I was doing, how I was getting on, whereas my unit manager now doesn't know what I'm doing. You lose that link between what you're doing now and what you're gonna be doing in a year's time. It makes it very difficult to have a sensible conversation.

SJA: Given these changes, have your expectations changed over time ?

BRUCE: To some extent, no they haven't. There is a huge stigma in IBM now of being 'old IBM'. You know, IBM's gone through immense cultural changes over the last, five or six years I guess, since we started losing vast amounts of money, and there's a lot of internal stigma about saying you preferred things as they were. It's seen as very retrograde for your career if you say things like that. You're seen as being the wrong type of person. But I still think, and a lot of other people do as well, that the organisation of having unit management and task management just doesn't work. I mean, unit management has its problems of individual managers fencing off resources and not sharing them around. But the unit management and task management split has more problems that it gives you benefits. I still regard the first line manager role as where I want to be, but I probably understand more now about what I need to do to get there than when I joined.

Another interesting feature of Bruce's talk here is his reference to the stigma of being 'old IBM', or more specifically, the stigma of saying you preferred things as they were. As he goes on: "It's seen as very retrograde for your career if you say things like that. You're seen as being the wrong type of person". Presumably, this means that to say such things openly would actually serve to slow down, or halt, an individual's career progression since 'those at the top' (as William might put it), are required to have a somewhat different mindset. (It is therefore interesting to see Bruce claim he still wants to be a first line manager !).

In a way we're missing something we used to have

SJA: What do you see as the implications of these changes for your career ?

PATRICK: There are some things we're missing from the days before matrix management. If the mentoring programme was encouraged and worked properly then I think that might fill the gap. There should be somebody in IBM who's interested in developing you so that IBM benefits from it. It just makes sense. IBM wins; you win. And I don't think that's there. I think it was, but it's not anymore. You need someone to trust who's looking after your interests. In some ways, we're missing something we used to have.

The preference for the 'old IBM' which Bruce is expressing is perhaps also an expression of loss, as illustrated more explicitly by Patrick above. The key thing

Patrick seems to be alluding to is the sense that there is no longer someone in the background 'developing' him and 'looking after his interests'. This is a theme we saw often in Chapter 5, but interestingly is much less common in IBM. Could this be a reflection of the fact that IBM has, historically, been less paternalistic, and thus individuals do not experience the degree of 'separation anxiety' expressed by others in highly paternalistic institutions ? This may be the case. However, in the spirit of the argument being developed through this chapter, it seems more plausible to argue that, in IBM, individuals have alternative structures (including a new vocabulary) to hold onto and with which to cope with this apparent sense of loss.

As Thomas illustrates below, one of the key advantages, perhaps, of a new context, a new infrastructure, a new vocabulary is that it can give individuals something with which to make sense of the emerging new reality. Thus, the conclusion he comes to, having decided he wants to be a project manager, is that he will need to "run around fast, learn fast, and make up for lost time" - presumably time lost, as he sees it, while he was not doing: being a project manager. It is interesting how, in contrast to the general attitude of subjects in the previous chapter, this 'reality dawning' does not seem to have traumatised Thomas; in fact, quite the opposite: "Being selfish, if they're getting rid of all these managers, then there's more opportunities. A lot of them were jamming up the management structure". Perhaps he now sees a clearer way, for him, through the organisation.

I need to learn fast, and make up for lost time

SJA: What changes have you seen in IBM, and do they impact your expectations ?

THOMAS: IBM's changed a lot in the last seven years, so your expectations change. When I was in manufacturing I envisaged becoming a second line manager, which I thought was achievable without taking up too much of my personal time. Now I want to be a project manager, to the same level. The organisation's different, so therefore your expectations change. Being selfish, if they're getting rid of all these managers, then there's more opportunities. A lot of them were jamming up the management structure.

SJA: Tell me about the company's career paths, route maps.

THOMAS: It's well intentioned, but if I look at the skills profile / route map, it's not at all where I want to go. The consensus is you never quite fit one of the profiles. It's not clear how that leads onto promotion. One of the problems I see in terms of career progression in AD is that in order for people to develop their career they have to leave AD, but none of the route maps tell you how to do that. What you need from the company is a set of enabling tools, not disabling tools. If you want career progression, there's two routes, but it doesn't help me fill in the skills profile. There's a different emphasis that comes from your unit manager and your project manager. I knew where I was, what my

current skill set was. And I knew where I wanted to be. I now need to run around fast, learn fast, and make up for lost time.

The argument that new HR systems, a transparent careers architecture, and a 'new vocabulary' provide useful social-psychological support mechanisms is a seductive one. However, as hypothesised in Chapter 1, this may not always be the case. While it seems reasonably clear there is something of a qualitative difference in some IBM subjects' responses to the emergence of the new deal versus subjects in the previous chapter, this is not exclusively the case, as Alan and Bruce illustrate below.

IBM profess to have a career plan, but it doesn't work that way in practice

SJA: Tell me about the changes you've seen in IBM in recent years.

ALAN: IBM has always professed to having a career development scheme to help you plan your career. But most of my job progressions have not been planned, with the aim of progressing my career; they have been natural things for me and colleagues of mine to do at the time. Most of those career changes, such as they were, have been sort of motivated by pressures at that time, rather than adherence to some plan. So, whether IBM profess to have this career development plan, it doesn't always work out that way in practice.

SJA: So how do these changes affect your career ?

ALAN: The thrust at the moment is we have the *Professions*, and I'm covered by the Application Development profession, and when you get to a certain level it clearly documents what skills you are required to have at that level, and what skills you need to gain to move up to the next level, and you're given a route map of all the specialisations within a profession, and you find out where you are on this route map, and you sort of plan where you want to go to get the skills you need to have to get to where you want to go. And then you go out and find the placement and get the skills. Sounds great. When it actually comes down to it, it seems to be this same old business of: these are the vacancies, we need people with X, Y and Z skills. They want people with the skills. So when it comes down to helping the individual develop the skills, it doesn't seem to be getting the support from the managers to make it work. So, getting the company to put its money where its mouth is and take the risk of placing people like me, it's not where the whole thing is yet. I feel like I'm being a little bit constrained. It might be different with someone else with a different skill set. It may just be luck. Business will continue as normal, and the people with the skills and the drive will continue doing that, regardless of the route map. People without the skills and the drive will continue to find that difficult. I tend to find myself following up personal recommendations rather than a vacancy coming out of the Resourcing Centre. The world-wide professions is simple; its aims are great. My problem is seeing how it will work at the cutting edge... . One develops a great deal of cynicism for these schemes.

In the above passage, Alan clearly illustrates that he is picking up on the new messages about careers, and seems to have understood the purpose of the Worldwide Professions. However, as with some speakers in the previous chapter, he sounds somewhat cynical that the rhetoric of the 'new way' will match with the reality of how

careers are developed in practice. As he perhaps quite rightly deduces, the company will, ultimately, want to ensure that it deploys staff with appropriate skills to particular projects in order to satisfy customer needs, and this will inevitably mean there is a tension as regards the development of individuals' skills. However, as with some subjects in Chapter 6, he seems to be alluding to the inevitable operation of a parallel system and, as such, wonders whether career development in the future will be any less about luck than it was in the past.

Likewise, Bruce (below) also seems somewhat cynical about the promises of the new deal. Unlike Alan, however, who reports a mismatch between the skills he (now) knows he needs to develop and the opportunities to develop them, Bruce's concern seems more obvious: he seems entirely overwhelmed by the volume of information wrapped around the message 'manage your own career'. In addition, he seems to be struggling with three specific aspects of the new deal, and hasn't yet unravelled what they might mean for him: first, how to close his skills gap (effective career development is about more than just going on courses); second, the lack of support or guidance (career self management *does* imply 'do it yourself'); and third, he has not yet appreciated that the resources being offered him are, in fact, the very tools he needs in order to take greater ownership (it's not, as he claims "just pure bureaucracy"). His final point, however, is very profound, and surely *does* indicate that some elements of the new message are indeed being embedded: "By definition you can't have everybody doing the top jobs... Saying to people: you manage your career, is just too simplistic. People need guidance, and most people need limitations 'cos they can't just go anywhere".

They say: manage your own career; make it happen. But what does that mean ?

SJA: To what extent have those changes had an impact on your career ?

BRUCE: There is an awful lot around at the moment, and it's growing monthly, from the point of view that you get route maps now saying these are the careers, and these are the things you'd have to go through to get there. I must admit, to my point of view they're evolving, but there's huge gaps. The most obvious thing is to have a cohesive package which says: you want to get to this position, well you're here now, well these skills you're short of, and to get these skills you need these courses. At the moment, you have to almost know what you're looking for before you start looking for it. I honestly feel at the moment there is too much information that isn't really explained, so people are quite... cynical. You've gone from having a first line manager who understood what you were doing, and where you were going, to talk to, to: 'you will manage your career'... and there was nothing. What does that mean, you know ? These things are not being explained to people. No-one's sitting down with me and saying: here's the project management route map; this is what it means to you; this is what you can get out of it. It's left to... you're mailed it, and someone says we'll have a presentation on it for half an hour at the unit meeting, and somebody comes along and says these are the basic

principles and what it's trying to do: go away and make it happen. And you feel... you know, you've got all this information you don't understand. So, I think, well I know, a lot of people are just paying lip service to it all, and they're just saying: well, it's far too much for me to understand, and it doesn't make a lot of sense; it's just pure bureaucracy. By definition you can't have everybody doing the top jobs, so 80% of the people need a far simpler version of things. You're wasting your time if 80% of people just want to get on and do some code. Saying to people: you manage your career, is just too simplistic. People need guidance, and most people need limitations 'cos they can't just go anywhere. You need to say: where do you want to go, and let's just focus on that, rather than having something which says you can go anywhere you want to.

TYPICAL CAREERS

As we saw in Chapter 2, the notion of new deals (and new dealing) implies the passing of one form of careers (hierarchical and intra-organisational) and the emergence of new forms of career ('negotiated' between individuals and employers, in order to meet both organisational and individual needs). This being the case - and especially in the context of the IBM case study, which seems more clearly to illustrate the emergence of a 'new' careers environment - it is worth reflecting on subjects' perceptions of 'typical' careers. We might expect that, in the past, one form of career dominated, whereas now, other forms are coming to the fore. This is indeed what the following passages seem to suggest.

You do this, that, and the other, and then you go into management

SJA: Is there such a thing as a typical career route in IBM ?

PHILLIPA: Programmer, team leader, project leader, few different projects, then you go into management. You'd do it that way.

SJA: Has your career developed in that typical fashion ?

PHILLIPA: It could be, because I've only just started doing the project leader role just recently. They do try to keep you doing development work. But I don't honestly know what IBM management think about this, whether you've just side-stepped, or you've gone back down, or whether it's now going to be a lot longer before... I don't know how they view that.

In this passage, Phillipa seems very clear that there is a typical career path in IBM and, interestingly, that the implied end point of the 'journey' is management. As her first comment suggests, the typical career involves first a period of moving 'up through the ranks' to ever more complex roles (programmer, team leader, project leader), before broadening out (doing a few different projects) and then moving into management. While this seems entirely logical, and indeed is consistent with the comments of other speakers before and below, it is interesting to note that Phillipa

does not suggest this is how it *used* to be. She draws no explicit distinction, for example, between this as a model of the 'old deal' career, and something new and different under the terms of the new deal.

Her second comment, however, does seem to suggest she is aware of a change in some of these assumptions when first she says "it could be": a reference to the fact she isn't sure how her future career will unfold; and second, when she says: "I don't honestly know what IBM management think about this, whether you've just side-stepped, or you've gone back down, or whether it's now going to be a lot longer before...". Implicit in Phillipa's comment is that, previously, movement between the positions she outlines was regarded as 'onward and upward' movement. Now she seems to be acknowledging that such a trajectory no longer implies real or perceived vertical progression: sideward and backward movement is inherent in the career offering under the terms of the new deal. As we saw from the IBM sponsors in Chapter 4, it is also true that the new deal implies one may have to move around many different positions at the same level before moving upward, and thus Phillipa is right to wonder whether "it's now going to be a lot longer before...".

By contrast, Orla (below) comments that she no longer thinks there is such a thing as a typical career. As she suggests, when she started (1987) there were "fairly methodical steps to get to different positions". However: "now... some roles don't exist". This seems to be a reference to delayering, in the sense that there are fewer increments in the career which take one 'methodically' between the various steps on the ladder. Thus, as she goes on: "it's [now] a bit more jumping around" (i.e. 'careering' in a different sense !). As she explains, under the terms of the new deal: "people tend to move between different jobs rather than up".

Nowadays, it's more jumping around really

SJA: Is there such a thing as a typical career in IBM ?

ORLA: I don't think there is anymore. Certainly when I started out it seemed to be a lot more easy, you know, fairly methodical steps to get to different positions, but it seems now that some roles don't exist. It's a bit more jumping around really. People tend to move between different types of jobs rather than up.

Where Phillipa and Orla appear, in a sense, to be in the early stages of accommodating and unravelling the messages of the new deal, the passage below suggests Fred, by contrast, has more fully appropriated the emerging/new discourse - both the vocabulary and the meaning - and so provides a rich narrative. This is

especially the case in his talk of developing core skills as a prerequisite to career success; moving sideways or even back in order to leverage one's longer term human capital; and his assertion that, now, it's not always going to be "up, up, up".

It's not necessarily always up, up, up

SJA: Has your career experience been typical of a career in IBM ?

FRED: In some respects it must be because you build on past experiences, you become an expert at your job, and you then become a centre of knowledge. So you become very good at what you do. And then they move you to the next stage of a career. They move you to another job which is more advanced, better paid, more responsibility, which I guess is a prerequisite for a career. It's not always a case of... because you have to make sideways moves and you have to make a decision, right I'm an expert in this but I really need, if you look at the long term goal. I need x number of years as a specialist, but I haven't got this skill, so maybe you're not stepping back, but it may be necessary for me to... The marketplace, customers, are dragging my career in some respects, so I have to become an expert in a specific technology as well. In which case, at the moment I don't have any knowledge in that area so potentially I'm having to step outside my expert sort of knowledge role. So it's not necessarily always up, up, up. Sometimes it might be a good move long term to move actually slightly down.

SUCCESS

In Chapter 5 we saw a high degree of commonality between speakers in their definitions and assumptions about success. In short, success for them was about maintaining career velocity and 'doing well' versus peers. In this chapter we have not seen the same degree of resilience or preoccupation with hierarchical progression since, as has been argued, the somewhat different discursive context in IBM appears to be producing qualitatively different career stories. It therefore seems important at this point to look at the notion of success and to consider the degree to which subjects in different organisations might use the same or different vocabulary to articulate what they mean by success.

In this following section we therefore look at two issues: subjects' perceptions of the rules of the career game now in IBM (the prerequisites for career success), and the degree to which they, individually, feel successful.

This first passage from Orla provides a useful vignette of these themes.

Success is about the level, salary, and someone saying: you're doing a good job

SJA: How would you define success ?

ORLA: Being paid a salary equal to or better than my peers, and someone telling me I'm doing a good job. And the levels and everything else that everybody relates themselves to in employment. So it's the level, the salary, and someone saying: yes, you're doing a good job.

SJA: When you joined IBM, what did you think it took to be successful ?

ORLA: A lot of hard work, but you obviously needed to be noticed by somebody: you needed a sponsor. There's a lot of good people in IBM who don't have a sponsor and so won't get as far as they should. In my early years I did have backing, someone who was pushing me through and helping me make all the right decisions. They moved on, and I struggled to find my feet. But now I've got someone who's interested in me and my career, so things seem to be picking up again.

SJA: Do you feel successful ?

ORLA: Not especially, no. I'm somewhat frustrated that I've got to this point and I don't feel I've achieved what I thought I would achieve. Having radically changed half way through I accept that that's set me back a good couple of years, maybe more.

The above passage provides a rich series of interesting themes. In Orla's first turn we hear that, for her, it is important to have someone recognise when she is doing a good job. However, it is the other two points she makes which are more important here. First, she talks about relative financial compensation - note the phrase "equal to or better than my peers". Second, she talks of "the levels and everything that everybody relates themselves to". This element of comparison, or relativity, is something we saw many times in the previous chapter and, in a sense therefore, is a theme which has a particular resonance with the terms of the old deal.

In her second turn, Orla again makes reference to something we have hitherto regarded as very much of the old deal environment, namely sponsorship. In short, it seems clear Orla thinks that without a sponsor, an individual is unlikely to get far in IBM, especially since there would be no-one 'pushing' them or helping them make the 'right decisions'. While it seems clear that IBM is not as paternalistic as some organisations, it does also seem that Orla is alluding to a time in IBM where the culture was at least relatively more paternalistic: the particular vocabulary she uses certainly *doesn't* suggest she saw IBM as an organisation in which career self management (and self direction) was a dominant theme when she joined.

Finally, we are given a direct answer to the question as to whether Orla feels successful. She replies: "Not especially, no". Given the commentary she has provided in her first two turns it is clear what she implies by her subsequent comments, namely that, after more than eight years in the company, she does not feel she has reached the level she wanted to achieve, and she seems to attribute this, as we saw earlier, to a

decision to change career paths after five years and follow a technical route: "I accept that that's set me back a good couple of years, maybe more" (i.e. in terms of hierarchical progression).

In the following passages, we see a variety of both similar and dissimilar commentaries on these issues. In the first passage we see Ursula supporting Orla's view that sponsorship is important.

To attract sponsors, people need to want to be ambitious

SJA: What does it take to be successful in IBM ?

URSULA: I think the culture is such that people need to want to be ambitious, and need to be ambitious to get the sponsorship. That's my perception... particularly as I was interested in the management side. I get the feeling that you need to be seen at certain levels to have the potential to move on to get the moves you want. It's quite political I suppose, but that's my view of things, especially when you're not a technician. When you're a technician I think it's slightly different because you get your credibility by how you work with clients, and the technical skills that you build up.

In the second we see Virginia talking of the importance of impression management and, perhaps, alluding to a time when this was as important - if not more important - than one's ability to deliver results.

Some people deliver; others sound good in meetings

SJA: What does it take to be successful in IBM ?

VIRGINIA: Now, do you want *my* view or the corporate view ? Uhm... my own personal view is that you should be able to deliver what is required... That's what I would classify as successful. We have many people in IBM who are considered successful, but I would still question whether they have actually delivered anything. Success in IBM, sometimes it comes through confidence, it's about being seen to be successful, or talk the right language: sound good in a meeting. But sometimes, these people... they've never done anything to get that reputation. They come across as confident, so people assume they're capable.

And in the third passage we see Thomas making a similar point about the importance of being *seen* to be putting in the effort.

Make sure you're seen putting in the effort !

SJA: What does it take to be successful in IBM ?

THOMAS: To be the right kind of person who wants to go in a certain direction; very dedicated; lots of hours. In old IBM, one way to get on was to put in vast amounts of unnecessary effort and to be seen doing so.

By contrast, in the following passage we see Alan (the reluctant careerist) providing a very clear summary of the new rules of the career game.

Understand your customers; understand your business

SJA: What does it take to be successful in IBM ?

ALAN: It takes not just an interest in the technical, but talking to customers, understanding their business. So, if you look at the skills required to advance in the *Professions* it's understanding of customers, understanding of business. That's not something I want to do, to become interested in the business. But if I want to progress I have to do that.

And in this final passage we see a very direct and specific answer from Fred which suggests, as earlier, that here is an individual who has clearly appropriated a new vocabulary. While some aspects of his talk are reminiscent of the terms of the old deal (work hard, play the game, have a face that fits), other elements of his talk are very much allusions to a very different environment - compromise (in the name of flexibility perhaps), keeping skills current (because that's what customers buy, and that's how you 'get on'), and putting things into perspective (perhaps an allusion to the need to accept the realities of the new environment). His final comment - "manage yourself" - is, of course, self explanatory, and very much the vocabulary of the new, career self-management culture.

It's clear what it takes to be successful

SJA: What does it take to be successful in IBM ?

FRED: Work hard; compromises in your personal life; keep your skills current; play the game; have a face that fits; don't be contentious; stand back; put things into perspective; manage yourself !

In the remaining passages in this section we see four different people considering the degree to which they feel they have been successful in their career to date. As with the previous passages above, the data largely speaks for itself, suffice it so say that throughout there is a clear emphasis on the attainment of a certain status (e.g. Thomas: "not until I got this job team leading. Before then I didn't get the seniority");

the attainment of managerial status 'ahead of time' (Ursula: "I came to management quite early; 28... which I guess is relatively successful"); and the importance of relative hierarchical and financial progression (Fred: "I've overtaken a couple of my friends who didn't do degrees... and I'm already earning more than them": Fred). By contrast we also hear from William about how he has, perhaps, achieved a degree of success, but has not yet completed his 'journey' ! (In particular note William's comment about, perhaps, the 'ultimate' signifier of his success: "I think I'll feel successful when I'm confident that I have got a job for life if I want it").

I feel successful now I've got some seniority

SJA: Do you feel successful ?

THOMAS: Not up until I got this job team leading. Before then I didn't get the seniority, so I was getting disgruntled with the organisation. Now, there's more opportunities to move up.

SJA: What is career success ?

THOMAS: A successful career is one that gives me interesting work and more money. Upwards yes, puts you higher up the tree, makes it more interesting. Without upward movement I'd leave the company.

I came to management quite early, so that was a sign of some success

SJA: Do you feel successful ?

URSULA: I do now yes. After project management, I did a year which was very much a career development year. I knew things were heading on the right track. It was a job where I learnt a lot, and it built up a lot of contacts. In my current job ? I came to management quite early; 28, so I'm seen as having reached that point fairly early, which I guess is relatively successful. I also think I've achieved quite a lot within the role. I feel that although my salary isn't quite what it should be, I've now got to the level where they've had to ramp my salary up, although it's not yet at the level it should be, and the level I've got in this job means I get a nicer car and all that sort of thing.

I've overtaken my friends, so yes, I do feel successful

SJA: Do you feel successful ?

FRED: Yes. I've overtaken a couple of my friends who didn't do degrees, which is quite interesting. So I've come from nowhere and I'm already earning more than them, which is quite nice. Career wise with IBM yes, I'm doing OK. I'm not doing as well as I'd like but it's early days. I'm quite happy with the way things are going.

I'm not successful yet, but I'm on the way

SJA: Are you happy with your time in IBM ?

WILLIAM: Yes, I think I've got a lot out of it.

SJA: Have you done well ?

WILLIAM: That's a very broad question !

SJA: Do you feel successful ?

WILLIAM: Hmm. Well, there are many ways in which you can measure success. If it was to come down to salary, remuneration, then yes, I'm successful, compared with others who joined at the same time as me. In terms of my aspirations being achieved... not yet, but I'm on the way... I do influence; I'm recognised by others as being successful, so that gives me the position of influence, and I'm happy with that. Whether or not I'd say I'm successful, no, not yet. Before I class myself as successful I've got a long way to go.

SJA: Would others see you as successful ?

WILLIAM: People outside IBM would look at me and say yes, successful. I have the trappings of success. But whether people within IBM would think the same... I don't know

SJA: Is there something else you need to achieve in your own mind before you'll feel successful ?

WILLIAM: I don't feel I've achieved *it* yet, but I don't know what *it* is. I think I'll feel successful when I'm confident that I have got a job for life if I want it; when I'll have so much influence or value to offer that I become invaluable to the company. So when the next round of redundancies come, the last person they'll think of will be me. That's when I'll know I've been successful.

LOOKING AHEAD

Finally in this chapter we briefly consider a number of different responses to questions about the future, individuals' prospects, and how they see their careers unfolding. Unlike in the previous chapter where there was clearly a strong theme running throughout the talk - (effectively, let's see how far I can get in *this* organisation, and then I'll decide; if I don't keep moving up, I'll leave) - the IBM subjects provide a much wider range of responses.

I'm interested in stability; I don't see the point in changing

SJA: What do you think you'll be doing, say five years or so from now ? Will you be with IBM ?

ALAN: Probably. I'm interested in stability. I don't see the point in changing. I don't particularly want to change job. Maybe my pay will go up !

SJA: Do you have any plans to develop your skills, maybe do further academic qualifications ?

ALAN: I've never considered doing any further qualifications. In terms of getting specific skills, I'll go on courses when the need arises. But I'm not going to go on courses unless I can use the stuff pretty soon. In terms of professional qualifications, in my line of work there's no professional body it would be useful to be aligned with. Maybe I should develop that sort of thing, but I only like to do things if I feel they're relevant.

In this first passage we seem to be hearing what seems to have become a fairly typical response from Alan; at best an inability to embrace change, and at worst a sublime ignorance of the 'dawning reality' of the new deal. His assertion that he will

"probably" still be in IBM in five years' time because, as he puts it, he's "interested in stability", seems to be missing an important point. In what is clearly a fast changing environment around him, the decision may not, in fact, be his to make. Whether or not he sees the point in changing may be irrelevant if he does not develop the skills which IBM's customers will want to buy.

We could argue, therefore, that Alan is, in many ways, a classic example of 'old IBM' thinking and, we might further argue, exemplifies the mindset of IBM senior management prior to the huge losses of the early 1990s. Thus, his subsequent comments have a rather foreboding undertone: "I've never considered doing any further qualifications" (as such, he is actively putting himself in a position of competitive disadvantage); "I'll go on courses when the need arises" (which may be too late); "there's no professional body it would be useful to be aligned with" (difficult to believe); and "I only like to do things if I feel they're relevant".

One reading of this passage, therefore, is that it is *not* representative of an *absence* of evidence to support the notion of a new discursive environment, but rather more simply the inability or unwillingness of one particular type of individual to actively engage with the new discourse. Another interpretation, of course, is that this is evidence of both the *presence* of a discourse of ownership and Alan's engagement with it. Simply put, he has heard the 'new messages', unraveled what they mean for him and, decided (as Luke in Chapter 5 might prefer) to make 'trundling along' and opportunism his (legitimate) customised career strategy. (This is a theme we shall return to in Chapter 7).

When I grow up I want to be a senior technician

SJA: What do you see as your future career options ?

PATRICK: I can see it going in a much more positive direction now, so I'm much more positive. I want to be in a position where I can influence. Hard to tell, except there are things I know I enjoy and I don't see that changing a lot.

SJA: Have you considered broadening into management ?

PATRICK: Technology excites me. I can't really get excited by business.

SJA: What will you be doing ten years from now ?

PATRICK: A technology role. More senior level.

Like Alan, Patrick also seems to be somewhat 'off the pace'. He claims he can now see his career going in a more positive direction, presumably because (as we saw earlier) he has begun to accommodate the rhetoric around skill development, and thus is beginning to understand the need to develop a specialism. It is interesting,

therefore, that he also claims he wants to be in a position of influence, but that does not mean general management: "technology excites me. I can't really get interested in business". Thus, he has a very clear idea of his future (likely in IBM): "a technology role. More senior level".

I'm trying to get to a level, but I'm not going to give up my social life

SJA: Where do you think you'll be five or ten years from now ?

GARY: I don't know what my limits are. I don't see myself as a top manager. I'm not the sort of person who's going to give up my social life for my career; I want them to blend in. If I need to, if I have to, I'll work long hours, but at 6.00 I'm out and I'm on a squash court. I'm certainly not going to sit and tap away, and pick up a computer paper. I try to balance it. I'm trying to get to a level, I don't think I'm trying to have a career where I'll be at the top of IBM. My goal is to write good bits of software, or to manage people. I'll take that responsibility, but I'm not going to drive it. My manager is different. He wants it; he really does want it, but that's not me.

In this passage it seems Gary has also reached a productive conclusion about his future prospects. Unlike most of the subjects in the previous chapter who were constructing their future careers around a notion either of attained rank or managerial status, Gary seems actively to have made a quite different decision: "I'm not the sort of person who's going to give up my social life for my career... at 6.00 I'm out and I'm on a squash court". As such, Gary suggests: "I don't see myself as a top manager... I'm trying to get to a level, I don't think I'm trying to have a career where I'll be at the top of IBM. My goal is to write good bits of software, or to manage people. I'll take that responsibility, but I'm not going to drive it".

For seemingly different reasons, Wendy appears to have reached a similar conclusion.

I'd like to be a manager, but it's just admin at the end of the day

SJA: Where do you think you'll be ten years from now ?

WENDY: Don't know. I'd like to think I'll be a manager, but as a woman I don't think I'll get very high. I cannot change the fact that women don't get on in IBM. It doesn't really bother me whether I'm a manager or not. People management; it's just admin at the end of the day. It doesn't interest me. But a consultant leading a team, that's different. My objective is to lead others in an area where I'm experienced. I'm still choosing where I want to go. That's the difference; I can now choose where I want to go.

And in this next passage, Ursula provides a seemingly well thought through rationale for wanting to construct a very different career, one which balances professional and

personal needs (again, themes characteristic of new deals rhetoric), and thus is likely to be more satisfying for her.

I want to be a consultant, and have a flexible working pattern

SJA: How do you see your career developing in the future ?

URSULA: It could go a number of ways at the moment. Last year, this job got quite heavy; took a lot out of me. But as I got into the role I started to think: what next ? And I couldn't really see anywhere I wanted to go *up* in the organisational structure, couldn't see any role models; I wasn't happy with how much effort I was having to put into getting anywhere. My personal life was taking a hit; and I was starting to think longer term about having a family and how this job would fit into that; and basically I don't think it does. So, I talked to other companies, friends and colleagues, trying to get it straight in my mind. Currently, I think my career will go more towards some kind of consultancy, and that's an open debate internally as well; my managers are aware of that. I am talking to companies outside IBM to do exactly that, training and consultancy. I quite like the idea of working for a completely different organisation; much smaller organisation. Ultimately I do want to have a much more flexible working pattern; even in the absence of children – I would still like to have time to do other things. If I stay with IBM in the long term, it will go down the consultancy route.

In this next passage we hear Bruce talking of the many different opportunities he feels will come his way in IBM over the next few years, and how he would be "comfortable" with those options, despite the fact that they may not be what he, or others, would formerly have regarded as 'career progression' *per se*. As he says, having spent twelve years building "a reputation and career", he would want to stay in IBM to reap the benefits unless, that is, someone offered him "an extra ten grand and a car", in which case, he concludes: "I doubt I would say no !".

We can, of course challenge the resilience of Bruce's espoused preference here but, in any event, this passage - like others before it - does seem to illustrate an engagement at least in a discourse of ownership. Put simply, speakers do at least seem to be thinking about options and choices, even if some of their decisions might, for now, look a little less than wholly sustainable.

There are plenty of things I could do, but is that progression, I don't know

SJA: Looking to the future, do you see yourself staying at IBM ?

BRUCE: Every Saturday at eight o'clock I ask myself that question, when the Lottery gets drawn. But yes, I certainly see enough opportunities here for what I want to achieve, over the next three, four, five years. There are significant projects coming up and basically we can't do them fast enough. Now, within those, there are many different roles I would feel comfortable doing, but whether any of those are necessarily what people might call progression, or what I might call progression in career terms, I

don't know. But I know that if it had a number of elements I'd be comfortable with, then I'd be comfortable with saying not only will I stay with IBM, but I would stay in the group I'm with now.

SJA: What about ten years from now ? Where do you see yourself ?

BRUCE: It's fair to say that I don't know, but IBM's still one of the best companies to work for. I've spent twelve years building a reputation and building a career. So I would want to stay here. But if somebody offered me an extra ten grand and a car, I doubt I'd say no !

And finally, we hear from Thomas who, in constructing his future career seems to have fully embraced the essential tenets of success in IBM under the terms of the new deal. As he puts it: "My overall tactic is to move into project management 'cos it's a more saleable skill inside/outside IBM" (a reference to the notion of employability and the development of portable skills. However, as he also reports, he does not have a "twenty year map". Why ? It seems that his final comment provides the answer, namely that when you are having to "go and do it yourself" it doesn't pay to try to plan your career too far in advance !

I have tactics, but I don't have a twenty year map

SJA: How do you see your career developing ?

THOMAS: I'd like to stay in IBM, if my career progresses from this job. My overall tactic is to move into project management 'cos it's a more saleable skill inside/outside IBM. But I don't have a twenty year map. I want to be in a satisfying job at each stage and be recognised. I think IBM does offer a good breadth of challenges, but I need to know I've got security in terms of my skills.

SJA: What do you see yourself doing in the next, say, five, ten years ?

THOMAS: I've never really looked that far ahead. I reckon when you've reached that level, to go any further would be too much of an impact on my life, and my family's too important to me to want to do that. As it is I'm working twelve hour days and I don't really want to be.

SJA: So how far are you planning ahead ?

THOMAS: About eighteen months. Beyond that it's very vague. I think... you used to have a managed career, but now you've not. If you're not on the high potential scheme, you have to go and do it yourself.

SUMMARY

In Chapter 4 it was argued that IBM and the Bank of England have, historically, shared a number of key features: a jobs for life culture, deep managerial layers, and hierarchically driven careers. However, as we have now seen, they are also very different institutions.

As this chapter has highlighted, there is clearly a difference between the organisations, both in terms of what IBM has done to reinforce the change from old to new career deals and, as a consequence, individuals' responses to the 'dawning reality'. This is a theme which is developed further in Chapter 7 where it is argued we can see persuasive evidence that the research subjects are actively engaged in the process of accommodating the new realities which mark the transition between old and new deal. This also, we can argue, begins to illuminate more clearly the process of reconstructing careers and identities.

However, second, we can also talk of resilient, context-dependent discourse since, aside from the obvious differences in the degree to which IBM subjects versus Bank of England subjects are appropriating the new vocabulary, there is a resilient quality in IBM to the theme/discourse of 'being a manager'. This, therefore, is also the subject of further consideration in the next chapter.

At a more general level, it seems clear that, at the time of the research, IBM had done more than the Bank of England to build a new infrastructure and vocabulary around careers and, as such, we can argue the research subjects are not displaying (or reporting) anything like the same 'struggle' to 'release' themselves from deep-rooted, old deal assumptions (outwith the enduring resilience of the 'being a manager' discourse referred to above). While some of the speakers, perhaps, show evidence of not having fully appropriated the new vocabulary, in by far the majority of cases it is clear we see subjects reproduce this new vocabulary in their talk. We might, thus, conclude that we are, quite literally, witnessing in the talk of the IBM subjects the process of embedding the new vocabulary in their discursive practices. Thus, while these practices might not yet be fully embedded organisationally (socially), at the individual level there does seem to be sufficient persuasive evidence that we are much further along the path here of the transition from old to new.

In the next chapter, therefore, we now bring together the key themes emerging from the case studies, and identify the key similarities and differences between the data presented in Chapters 5 & 6. In particular, we focus on the different discursive contexts of the two organisations, as well as pointing up those discourses or interpretative repertoires which seem to be available to subjects in both organisations and, thus, are seen to operate through the talk of subjects in both cases. First, however, the chapter begins with a brief review of the key theoretical issues outlined in earlier chapters in order to set an appropriate context for this wider analysis and discussion.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings together key perspectives from the careers literature; key issues and questions raised by the philosophical/methodological position adopted; and, of course, key themes emerging from the case studies. The focus, however, is on the latter. In addition, this chapter seeks to explore the relationships between four key subjects discussed in this thesis - rhetoric, reality, context and discourse.

The chapter begins with a brief consolidation of the more important theoretical issues raised in Chapters 2 and 3. Thus, key assumptions and orientations are spelled out in respect of career theory, philosophy and methodology. This is important in order to set the theoretical context of later sections and, in particular, those sections dealing with the identification and analysis of the themes, rhetorics and discourses which can be seen to be evident in (or absent from) the data presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

The chapter continues with a reiteration of the importance of context, before going on to synthesise the key contextual features of each of the case study organisations. This section is important in order to remind the reader of the organisational and discursive context of the fieldwork, as well as reinforcing the positioning of the thesis within the wider contextually-contingent debates.

At the heart of the chapter is an analysis of the case studies. This is key in order to draw together the issues in this thesis around rhetoric, reality, context and discourse. The approach taken is to bring to light the key themes emerging from the case study chapters, and to say something about the rhetorics and discourses which seem to be operating in subjects' talk. Two key issues will be referred to throughout this analysis. First, distinctions are made between rhetoric and discourse in order to point up the difference between vocabularies/discursive repertoires which are of an emergent quality, and thus not fully embedded organisationally (rhetorics) versus vocabularies and repertoires which have a more enduring or resilient, as well as more integrative nature (discourses). Second, distinctions are made between those rhetorics or

discourses which seem to be largely independent of organisational context, and thus more embedded at a societal level, and those rhetoric or discourses which seem either to be context-specific or, more accurately in most cases, have a particular resonance in their manifestations in one or either of the case study organisations.

Thus, this section of the chapter opens with a consideration of what I am calling the discourse of betterment, a key feature of which (in the context of organisational careers) is what we might call the 'career as hierarchical progression' discourse. This, it is argued, is a classic example of a discourse which is deeply rooted, historically and socially, and thus serves to generate a collective social sense of what careers 'should' be and what career success 'should' look like. Second, in this same category, we look at the theme of loss and coping, and point to the different ways in which the language of loss and coping (on the back of the 'removal' of the old deal) manifests itself in similar ways in both organisations.

We then continue by looking at a number of key themes which seem to speak more directly to one or other of the case study organisations, and thus we seek to identify the evidence to argue for the presence of context-specific rhetoric or discourse. This is not to say, of course, that these discourses are not 'available' to subjects in both organisations, rather it points to the fact that they are a particularly potent and defining feature of the discursive environment of one or other. That being said, comment is also offered, as appropriate, as to the possible reasons for the apparent absence of these discourses in the other organisation. Thus, in this part of the chapter we look at the related themes of 'paternalism', 'relativity' and 'velocity' in the context of the Bank of England, and the key theme of 'being a manager' in IBM.

Finally in this section, we look at the theme of 'accommodating new realities', which embraces two further themes, 'ownership' and 'customisation'. These themes, much like the themes of 'betterment' or 'loss and coping' highlight key points about the similarities and differences between the two case study organisations - specifically, in this instance, the degree to which we have evidence in the data to support the notion of (re)construction as a defining feature of the transition between old and new.

The chapter then goes on to consider the implications of this analysis and revisits the key issues and questions outlined earlier in the thesis. Drawing on Chapters 1 & 2, we then review the nature of organisational change and the emergence of new deals; summarise the predicates of the new deal; and, for the purposes of clarity, re-visit our definition of 'old' and 'new'. This leads to a reconsideration of the title of this thesis and the fundamental assertions therein. Thus, we answer two questions: first, on the

subject of rhetoric or reality, is it evident in either or both of the case studies that a 'new deal' was emerging at this particular point in the new deal storyline ?; and second, if it was, what can we say about the theoretical assertion made earlier that the emergence of new realities leads to a reconstruct of careers and identities ? We then look briefly at the implications and relevance of this thesis, for practitioners operating in the career development field.

The final section of this chapter first outlines my reflections on the research process, the limitations of the research design and methodology, and the knowledge claims and contributions this thesis is seeking to make. Finally, under the banner of 'new directions', a few, brief comments are made about the way in which the field of career theory might develop from the perspective offered here, and three specific areas for further research are outlined.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In Chapters 2 and 3 a wide variety of theoretical, philosophical and methodological influences were claimed and, as such, the theoretical lens through which this research has been constructed is a complex one. This is particularly so given the attempt here to bring together two hitherto largely separate fields - career theory and discourse analysis. Given this complexity it is necessary, therefore, to unravel some key points from Chapters 2 and 3 in order to provide a clear 'route map' with which to navigate subsequent sections of the chapter. This is done by looking first at career theory, and then philosophy and methodology.

Perspectives on Career Theory

In both the Preface and Chapter 1, the classical components of career identified by the Chicago School (principally Shaw, 1931) were outlined, namely the situational, chronological and relational. These distinctions are an important reminder of the richness of the career concept, and have influenced the development of this thesis in three ways.

First, a sensitivity to the situational component of career serves to remind us of the importance of understanding the organisational context in which the work history (the objective career) evolves. It also reinforces a fundamental ethnomethodological principle that career stories have a situational specificity and, thus, we should seek to understand the indexical reference points of subjects' talk.

Second, sensitivity to the chronological component of career reminds us, of course, that the career evolves through what Hughes (1937) called the 'passage of time'. As such, its reality is, by definition, both contingent and temporal. It also follows that the career story has an historical specificity, and this reinforces for us the importance (in Foucauldian terms) of trying to understand its archeology or genealogy.

Third, the relational component of career is important, not simply in the classical sense of the physical interaction between individuals and significant others (e.g. line managers), but more fundamentally in terms of the consequences of discursive interaction for the individual's objective and subjective career. This perspective thus encourages us to problematise the notion of the 'relationship' between the individual and 'the other', and hence we can talk also of the relationship between 'subject' and 'discourse'. The nature of *this* interaction, we can argue, creates important consequences for particular constructions of career and identity.

Perspectives on Philosophy & Methodology

As outlined in Chapter 3, the early stages of this research were influenced, variously, by my readings of phenomenology, ethnomethodology and hermeneutics. In the broadest terms, this led to an interest in how people make sense of their career, and it follows that I have come to be interested in the ways in which individuals construct their careers through the act of talking about them. Subsequently, my appreciation for the importance of language in constructing social reality grew significantly as I was exposed to the varied fields of Discourse Analysis and Social Constructionism. Over time, my exposure to these fields has supported the development of this thesis from three perspectives.

First, in adopting a language-oriented approach to the study of careers we should seek to understand the performative qualities of the career story. That is, in keeping with the tradition of discourse analysis represented by Potter & Wetherell (1987) we should seek to understand the interpretative repertoires upon which speakers draw in the process of constructing their career stories; we should seek to understand what speakers 'do' with their words; and we should speculate on the functions the career story serves.

Second, in keeping with the tradition of discourse analysis represented by Parker (1992) we should seek to identify the discourses to which subjects appeal in the construction of their career stories, and we should expose the 'subject positions' and power relations created by them.

Third, the perspective of Social Constructionism compels us to speculate on the constructive components of talk and thus, in the context of the thesis presented here, say something about the way in which the subjective career is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. By extension, we should also seek to problematise the impact of this constructive process on the self.

Summary

It follows that, in our analyses, we should also consider three things: i) how subjects talk of their vocational experiences (and aspirations); ii) those resilient discourses, concepts, frameworks or categories which feature in subjects' talk and appear to be either context-dependent or independent of context; and iii) the degree to which subjects' stories are plausible and internally consistent - i.e. the degree to which they present versions of truth which are acceptable to others [Sarbin, 1986; and Gergen & Gergen, 1984; 1986].

As appropriate, the above themes and issues are referred to in the analysis and discussion sections which follow. First, however, I wish to remind the reader of some important issues of organisational context.

CONTEXT

Introduction

A key theme resonating throughout this thesis has been that context is fundamentally important. That is, in order to appreciate both the contingent and temporal nature of subjects' career stories we must seek to understand the organisational and discursive context in which those stories are constructed. This is important given the argument presented previously that the concepts, categories, interpretative repertoires or discourses available to us culturally shape our sense of who we are, and provide the 'raw material' with which we can articulate and bring meaning to our experiences [see Burr, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 1984; 1986; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Parker, 1992; Sarbin, 1986]. The following comments, therefore, serve first to summarise the key contextual similarities and differences between the two case study organisations.

As we saw earlier, historically the Bank of England and IBM have shared a number of key similarities. For example, both had career structures characterised by deep managerial layers; both recruited graduates in order (albeit to differing degrees) to

provide feedstock to meet future senior staffing needs; and both espoused the 'onward and upward' assumptions of bureaucratic organisational careers. In addition, at the time of this research, both were being affected by larger forces outside of their immediate control. It is also interesting to note that Eddie George and Lou Gerstner were appointed to their respective positions within eight months of each other, and thus set about the radical changes which were to shape the Bank of England and IBM respectively at, broadly, the same time. There is thus, also, a coincidence of timing in both organisations as regards the emergence of the new realities.

However, as the following sections remind us, there were also key differences - key 'cultural notes' which serve to create very different indexical reference points in individuals' career stories.

As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, three key features characterise the context of the Bank at the time of this research, and serve to mark the beginnings of a shift in the terms of the career deal. First, following a strategic review of the Bank's purpose in 1993, two 'wings' were created - the Monetary Stability wing and the Financial Stability wing. The creation of these two wings served to highlight a 'pendulum swing' away from what we might regard as the old deal (in which becoming an 'all round central banker' was the preferred career development model) toward a new career deal (in which economics became the *de rigeur* discipline). Thus, the old generalist skills were no longer sufficient to ensure career advancement: instead, specialist economic skills were required. Second, the creation of the two, very distinct wings, coupled with downsizing and delayering in the wake of increased competition from other central banks, and the influx of specialist contractors into key positions, served to reduce career mobility. This brought into question the continued viability of the 'forty year career' and, arguably, served to fuel an already competitive careers landscape. Third, coincident with the formation of the two wings and Bank-wide downsizing and delayering, the Personnel function was gradually decentralised. Thus, with the abolition of the Officials' Development Group (ODG), there was a distinct shift away from the centralised planning and co-ordination of careers (the old deal) toward a philosophy of career self-management (new deal). The Bank also introduced a job advertising system, designed to bring more transparency to the internal market, and to reduce the dependency on the Centre to facilitate moves. These changes brought with them the loss for individuals of a broader and, in some people's opinions, 'neutral' perspective on the range of available opportunities.

In IBM, by contrast, a period of significant upheaval began approximately four years prior to the commencement of this research when the global company suffered

significant operating losses. As a result, IBM embarked upon a significant worldwide restructuring of its businesses, and large-scale downsizing and delayering ensued. These changes began to take place in late 1993/early 1994, and so by the time of this research had begun to take hold.

Three key features characterise the context of IBM at the time of this research, and serve to mark a shift in the terms of the career deal. First, a reduction in the number of permanent employees and an increase in contractors served to create a more flexible staffing plan. This also symbolised the end of the 'jobs for life' culture in IBM, and marked the demise of IBM 'corporate man'. With this came a recognition that there would need to be a fundamental review of the role of the much revered 'IBM manager', and an increased emphasis on contribution as the prerequisite to career success (as opposed to loyalty and tenure). Second, a clear distinction was made between technical and non-technical careers, and with it a distinction between project management and people management skills. This also served to unravel one of IBM's sacred cows, namely that to 'get on' in IBM one would, at some point, have to be a manager (of people). Instead, the 'new deal' removed the inevitable ceilings hitherto a reality for technical staff and, in a sense, served to dilute the status of manager. Third, the company recognised that, in a flatter organisational structure, hierarchical careers were no longer viable, and so it set about the implementation of the Worldwide Professions. This framework brought with it an integrated career development infrastructure, incorporating route maps and career paths to assist individuals in career self management. It thus provided a greater degree of transparency in the career development process and made more visible the criteria for progression. The system, thus, began to bring about a greater sense of personal ownership for career management, as well as a sense of partnership between employees and managers, and the mantra became: "IBM supports whatever career you want to develop".

Thus, at the time of this research we were beginning to see transitions in both the Bank of England and IBM from one deal to another.

At the outset to this research, it seemed logical that employees in both organisations would, to some extent, share similarities in the themes of their career stories since, at some level, they would share (have access to) the same interpretative repertoires, regardless of context. However, it was also anticipated that key differences between the two organisations would serve to create quite different discursive contexts. Thus, we would also expect to see speakers generate somewhat different themes in their talk. This, in fact, appears to have been the case. These issues are now the concern of the following sections.

THEMES, RHETORICS & DISCOURSES

Introduction

Earlier in this thesis I described myself as a contextualist-interpretivist researcher. This positioning necessitates that, in the following sections, I unpack the case study chapters and, in so doing, offer an interpretation of the key themes emerging in subjects' talk, paying particular attention to the context of that talk. This positioning also requires commentary on those themes which seem to be somewhat *independent* of context - i.e. a feature of subjects' talk in *both* organisations. In addition, I described myself as having an orientation, for theory-building purposes, to discourse analysis. Thus, the following analysis will also seek to expose those rhetorics and discourses which serve to define variously a temporal or emerging discursive context, and those which create a more enduring, resilient one.

In the following sections, we look at seven key themes: 'betterment'; 'loss and coping'; 'paternalism'; 'relativity'; 'velocity'; 'being a manager'; and 'accommodating new realities' (which also embraces two sub-themes: 'ownership' and 'customisation').

Betterment

The theme of betterment provides a useful introduction to the following discussion since it is resonant of a vocabulary which imbues subjects' talk in both the Bank of England and IBM. It is, also, therefore, representative of a discourse which, as argued earlier, is seemingly independent of organisational context, and embedded more at the societal level. As such, it is a discourse which constructs meaning at many different levels, though in the context of organisational careers is most accessible to us through the 'career as hierarchical progression' discourse.

The discourse of betterment is, thus, about success (the accomplishment of a broad aim or favourable outcome); hierarchy (grades, classes and statuses); and, of course, progression (forward, onward and upward momentum in the direction of our desired destination - rank, in the Bank of England; or the status or office of manager/Expert, in IBM). It also, of course, speaks to the concerns of developmental theorists, with its allusions to the improvement of body, mind and spirit or, in Scheinian terms, 'career self efficacy'.

More broadly still, however, we can argue that the discourse of betterment brings to light deep-seated assumptions about humanity's fundamental goals of reproduction

and continuous improvement, and it therefore has deep historical and cultural roots. Thus, we could argue, the 'career as hierarchical progression' discourse is firmly rooted in Western, capitalist notions of what success means. Its origins could be traced back through organisational forms of the 19th and 20th centuries, at least as far back as the first industrial revolution and, subsequently, the turn to *scientific management*⁷⁰. However, if (from a Foucauldian perspective) we were to take a more explicitly archaeological or genealogical approach, we could doubtless trace its origins further back still to the beginnings of recognisable human civilisation (the Romans, Greeks, or Egyptians) as Man sought organisational labour structures within which to marshal resources for building cities; armies for the purposes of territorial defence or colonial expansion; or civil governments for the purposes of social control and the enforcement of law. Or, more fundamentally still, we could doubtless engage the skills of philosophers and theologians and determine that the great philosophical and religious texts of our times (the Bible, the Koran, the Talmud) point to more fundamental roots still.

It is, thus, a discourse which is pervasive, both at the societal and organisational level, and so serves to create a very strong sense (socially and organisationally) that, in order for one to feel 'successful' in career terms, one must have 'achieved' substantive improvements in rank, status, social position or wealth, in the process of 'having' a career. Thus we see in the talk of subjects in both the Bank and IBM, much reference to the importance of progression and advancement; releasing one's talents; reaching out - realising one's potential.

This discourse is particularly manifested - (and especially so in the Bank) - by talk about the progress people have made and the satisfaction they have derived from certain jobs, whilst still feeling they have *not* been 'successful'. In other words, they have bettered themselves in some sense, but have not achieved or attained either the rank or badges of worth they have desired as the outward symbols of that (hierarchically-driven) success. Thus, they have variously 'not done well' versus their peers. As a result, their expectations have not exactly been *dashed*⁷¹, but certainly, and very clearly in some cases, they might not have been met. Interestingly, we could speculate that this phenomenon is likely to remain in both institutions with the emergence of a new deal since, in the case of the Bank, guaranteeing the attainment of specific destination ranks is (for the non-economists at least) unlikely; and, in the case of IBM, with the appropriation of the metaphor of 'career as a journey', there is the

⁷⁰ See F W Taylor (1911).

⁷¹ To use Herriot et al's (1993) phrase.

'danger' individuals are setting up a notion of career which has no sense of ever 'arriving' - literally, the prospect of 'careering' around from job to job, *ad finitum*.

For the individual, then, the consequences of this are, potentially, quite profound. If, as we have seen, some people choose not to realign their expectations with the 'dawning' reality, there is the possibility they may never take the 'corrective' action they need to take in order to remain on whatever trajectory they wish to be on. We again see the operation of this dynamic in individuals' talk in both organisations, albeit in different ways. In the Bank, for example, we see it manifested in the language of blind faith, naive optimism or trust in the passing of time as healer of ambiguity; and in IBM we see the language of opportunism come to the surface in speakers' assertions that they will wait until they have to better themselves, differentiate themselves, or position themselves for future opportunity (e.g. by 'going on courses').

Counterfactually, we do also, of course, see the embedding of an arguably 'richer' vocabulary of betterment in IBM, in subjects' talk of taking ownership for their careers, investing time and energy into the development of 'skills customers will buy' (which, incidentally, some subjects also noted created *enhanced* human capital for them insofar as those skills might be portable - again, a metaphor of betterment); and the benefits the new Worldwide Professions brought insofar as 'any career is possible' and thus barriers to self-improvement have been removed.

As we can see, therefore, the discourse of betterment is both rich and evocative, as well as potent in its consequences for individuals. It also has a key relationship to the 'career as hierarchical progression' discourse and thus, in terms of traditional bureaucratic, organisational careers brings a defining character to our commonplace conceptions of what (in Collin's terminology) a career 'was, is and might become' in the context of the emerging new realities.

Loss, Scepticism & Coping

As indicated above, such is the power, resilience and deep-rootedness of the discourse of betterment and the 'career as hierarchical progression' discourse that when the end of the career is proclaimed, and the old deal 'unilaterally withdrawn' (as one speaker in the Bank put it), individuals' reactions, not surprisingly, can be quite potent - with espoused emotions ranging from anger, shock or rejection through to, in some cases, deep ontological insecurity. There is, thus, for some, an overwhelming sense of loss.

The pervasiveness of this theme of loss is quite clear in subjects' talk in both organisations albeit, again, to somewhat differing degrees. Thus, we hear much talk of what has gone, or disappeared. However, it is not the passing of the old deal *per se* which is being spoken of here, since 'the deal' is simply a reification; a shorthand for a gamut of other, more specific things whose absence is being mourned. Thus, we hear of other things being 'taken away' - care in times of trouble; direction and advice as to the 'best' career route one should take; and support, both practical and indirect. This is manifested in talk of there no longer being 'someone in the background' to look after one's interests and, as a result, in one notable case we hear one subject claim 'it's now every man for himself'. In other words, the proclamation of a new deal simultaneously marks the passing, the 'death' even, of the old - and this, on the basis of the talk produced in some cases, is probably how it feels.

The implications for the individual, therefore, are spoken of in terms of deficit. In the Bank of England, for example, we hear talk of the loss of competitive advantage which the provision of perfect knowledge, from the Centre, hitherto provided - (or, at least, it provided that illusion !). And in IBM, as a result of the move to matrix management, we hear of the loss of quality time with managers to discuss career development, and thus an absence of perspective on one's future career direction.

On a more positive note, however, it is also clear that the discourse of loss or deficit allows some speakers to talk about those things which, in their loss, create positive consequences. Perhaps the most pertinent of these - in both cases - is the loss of 'deadwood' or 'bad people in the wrong jobs', which (it is said) creates opportunities for some people to continue scaling the hierarchy, despite the 'passing' of the old deal.

Given this general context, it follows that some individuals, as we have seen, will respond with a degree of (healthy) scepticism to the emerging new order, and thus we hear quite a bit of talk about the potential operation of 'parallel systems' (where jobs are not filled transparently by job advertising systems, but covertly by virtue of 'who you know'); and, more generally, talk of waiting to see if the emerging rhetoric (or 'Personnel speak') meets the reality of 'how it will work in practice'. We therefore see, variously, the vocabulary of doubting or unbelieving articulated at one end of the spectrum, and a more potent language of denial or incredulity at the other.

What we are witnessing here, both at the level of the talk and, most probably, 'beyond the talk' at the emotional level, is the operation of various coping mechanisms. Thus, the appearance of the language of denial is probably indication of a speaker's necessary retreat to a 'safe haven' from which to build up the resources (linguistic and

emotional ?) to then embrace and come to terms with the emerging reality. It thus marks a temporary withdrawal from the 'pain' of the dawning reality before, in all probability, subjects emerge more confidently to appropriate the language of the new and, thus, 'escape' the clutches of the old.

Clearly, the two case study organisations show both this coping mechanism, and the discourses which create it, operating in different ways and, to some extent, this should not be surprising. That is, if we accept the general assertion at this stage that we are here seeing two organisations emerging from the old into the new deal at somewhat different rates, then we would, of course, see differing degrees of ability or inability to cope with this transition, and this would be reflected in the essential emotive quality of subjects' language choices. More specifically, we might begin to argue that what we are seeing in this research is one organisation (the Bank) which has, effectively, done very little to create a new discursive context following the pronouncement of the end of the forty year career; and another (IBM) which seems, in some senses, to have done much more to introduce a 'richer' (more fully integrated) discourse. The consequence of this, linguistically, is that the IBM research subjects have simply got more to 'hang onto' - literally a broader and deeper vocabulary with which make sense of the changing context around them. This has been reinforced, of course, by the introduction of an integrated HR infrastructure: career paths, route maps, and so on. Therefore, again, IBM subjects have more to hold onto and, thus, 'cope' with their 'dawning reality'.

From a change management perspective, of course, we could also begin to argue here that the Bank is therefore in something of a 'frozen' state, whereas in IBM we are seeing the creation of a more transformational discursive context. This is a theme we shall return to later.

The preceding discussion has focused on some general themes which seem to 'cut across' both organisational contexts. I have thus, also, argued for the presence of resilient (and indeed deeply-rooted) context-independent discourses which define the antecedent nature of the discursive contexts of the case study organisations. In the following few sections we now look at instances of what I am calling context-dependent rhetoric/discourse - that is, rhetoric ('simple' and emergent) or discourse (integrated and resilient) which seems to say something important about the essential nature of one or other of the case study organisations. First we turn to the Bank of England and look at the themes of 'paternalism', 'relativity' and 'velocity'.

Paternalism

Perhaps the most enduring theme to emerge from the Bank of England case study is that of paternalism; namely, a sense that the environment of the Bank - (its 'culture') - is fundamentally characterised by notions of protection or guardianship⁷² on the one hand, or family, affiliation and kinship on the other. These are components, of course, of the relational contract which defines the 'old deal' and, in particular, the environment in which there is a sense of empathy, concern (even goodwill or charity): in other words, as Herriot & Pemberton (1995) put it, 'care in times of trouble'.

From another perspective, we can also see that this 'culture' of paternalism - (or, more accurately, the pervasiveness and resilience of the discourse of paternalism - in *this* context) - sets up very specific power relations. There is much allusion to 'the Bank' or 'the Centre', as some kind of omnipotent and omniscient force, especially in the context of the direction and management of careers where, it seems, individuals assume 'the Bank' or 'the Centre' possesses *perfect knowledge*.

In short, the over-riding flavour of this discourse in this organisational context, therefore, is: 'the Bank will tell me what to think and do' and 'I trust the Bank to tell me how far I can go and to get me there'.

What we are talking of here, therefore, is a 'parent-child' dynamic. To emphasise the point, it is interesting to note, for example, the presence of child-like discourse: 'why can't I' [do a tour / be an all round central banker - if that's what I want]; and 'do I have to ?' [manage my own career - why can't you do that / you used to / why did you change the rules ?]. There is thus variously a rebellious, immature, or even subversive quality to *some* subjects' talk, or alternatively a quintessential innocence or naïveté which is exposed through their language choices.

On the other hand, this paternalistic environment does also, of course, set up a dynamic in which 'Daddy knows best'⁷³ and, as a result, the language of many other research subjects belies what seems to be a firm belief in the reliability of the Bank's judgement. One of the key consequences of the operation of this parent-child discourse is the subordination of the research subjects, and thus we can see the 'subject position' in this discourse very clearly as 'child' dependent or reliant upon the other - the 'parent'. This relationship manifests itself in subjects' talk in four key ways.

⁷² Which, of course, also reflect the institution's core purposes.

First, as above, there is an over-dependence on the views of others - 'the Bank' / 'the Centre' - to understand the full range of career development opportunities and thus direct individuals' careers in their best interests. Second, there is a clear and strong climate of trust: there is little challenge from individuals to this trust - it is largely taken to be (spoken of as) absolute and unconditional. Third, this therefore creates consequences in terms of ownership in that, in this organisational context, individuals do not seem at all minded to 'take ownership' for their career - why should they if others will direct events in their best interests ? (It is also worth noting that a discourse of ownership - the acknowledgement of possession - is entirely absent in subjects' talk). And fourth, there is thus an overwhelming sense that individuals are not in control of their own careers, in any recognisable way. Their destinies are 'out of their hands'. It may, of course, be stretching the metaphor too far, but it is also a perverse irony that the letters 'ODG' - (Officials Development Group) - reconfigure to spell 'God'. No doubt a discursive psychologist could have a field day unraveling the impact of *this* allusion on espoused attitudes toward dependency, freedom and self-determination !

It follows that we also see much talk about luck and opportunism, and also the notion that the mere passage of time will clarify all. Chance seems to be regarded as the bringer of good fortune - opportunities will not be self-created or planned for, but seized upon as and when they occur. The question is: why is there an unwillingness to take control ? There are, perhaps, three answers.

First, we could argue that we see, in different ways, the manifestation of the language of denial, whether it be in the casual dismissal of the resilience of the emerging reality, or proclamations of immunity or, more directly, burying heads in buckets of sand. Alternatively, we might point to a lack of readiness on the part of individuals, as manifested in comments like: "manage your own career: how do you do that ?". In other words, the reliance on the views of others or the willingness to volunteer oneself as a hostage to fortune, *may* simply be indicative of coping mechanisms in light of the onset of a change process. However, from the perspective of discourse we should resist over-speculation on this issue, and simply point to the discursive consequences of the 'competition' between these discourses and the 'struggle' it creates for individuals.

More fundamentally there is also here an important issue about decision-making, and questions which need to be addressed as to the apparent unwillingness of individuals

⁷³ Because 'Daddy', of course, is always assumed to be the possessor of 'perfect knowledge' !

to 'take' some ownership for their careers and destinies. Given the nature of the organisational context in which these careers are played out, and the meanings individuals ascribe to the notion of 'career success' (see below), it seems there is, fundamentally, a fear of making the 'wrong' decision. That is, individuals seem unwilling to 'wrestle back' control of their careers (or, rather, engage in a discourse of career self management) because they are concerned not to limit future options, and thus dilute their potential career freedom or liberty. (This, of course, is unsurprising in an environment in which individuals have been used to receiving 'perfect knowledge').

More specifically, we could argue this is about the fear of suboptimising ultimate success (attained rank) and thus failing to make the best use of one's abilities (i.e. *not* 'doing well'). The consequences of being decisive, taking control, but then making the 'wrong' decision are, of course, potentially profound - self-inflicted damage to one's career (nothing short of career self-sabotage). This particular reading again supports the observation of the absence of a clear and distinct discourse of career self management - there is talk of it, but it retains the quality of rhetoric. It has not become embedded - it lacks traction (sustainability).

The preceding discussion highlights the pervasiveness of a fully integrated discourse of paternalism. It is a discourse which contains other, related, discourses; it refers back onto/into itself; and it clearly creates power relations. It is also a discourse which takes on an added potency in the context of the Bank, creating very real consequences for the 'relationship' between the individual and 'the Bank' and, thus, very distinct subject positions. This, therefore, is what I mean by resilient, context-dependent discourse; a type of discourse which has powerful, and sustainable, consequences for careers and identities.

Relativity

The second, and quite distinct theme (or discourse) emerging from the Bank of England case study is what I will call 'relativity'. It is a discourse which is deeply interwoven with notions of success and (hierarchical) progression and thus, like all discourses, it 'speaks to' other discourses. However, the notion of relativity, I will argue, is a very particular, context-dependent manifestation of the 'career success equals hierarchical progression' discourse, and shows itself in ways which are quite specific to this institution.

Throughout the talk of practically all of the Bank of England research subjects runs a commonality of expectation. In short, the talk is about looking forward (and upward), hoping and assigning probabilities to likely future accomplishments. There is also, as we have seen, a strong theme of 'doing well' - a fundamental (even ontological) *need* to do well, to maximise (or exceed) potential, unleash latent capability and, thus, gain one's 'just rewards'. In other words, identities are, to some extent, wrapped up in how *far* subjects think they can go. (Or, again, for the purposes of clarity, identities are shaped or constructed in this fashion because of the power and resilience of the discourses which provide for us this notion of 'doing well').

It follows that when subjects talk of success they operationalise an arguably complex and multi-faceted concept in a more simplistic yet very potent way. In the Bank, success is not simply about the accomplishment of a broad life-aim or the realisation of potential; it is about attained rank - almost to the exclusion, as we have seen, of any concern over the nature of one's role or the satisfaction it brings. It is thus about positioning in a hierarchy, but not just any hierarchy; the hierarchy in the Bank is deeply rooted in 300 years' history of deference and servitude. Thus, positioning in the hierarchy in the Bank is, more fundamentally, a statement of grade or class - a statement of one's 'quality' in the literal sense.

It follows that the language of progression, forward momentum, moving onward and upward pervades subjects' talk, especially about future career expectations, and manifests itself in talk about specific destination ranks which *will* be attained in X years' time. This is not, therefore, the language of a progressive journey which speaks to a broader discourse of betterment (e.g. advancement or improvement - in the developmental sense) but, instead, is about 'getting there' - arriving at the destination; reaching one's 'place' in the scale.

To a large extent we could, of course, speculate that this particular discursive context would be apparent in other organisations in which there is a deeply-embedded hierarchy, and thus we might argue this is an example of a discourse which is not wedded to context. This might be the case, and indeed is the subject of discussion later in this chapter, but when we look at this from the perspective of relativity, we see more clearly a context-specific manifestation of this particular discourse.

Throughout subjects' talk there pervades a sense, in sociological terms, that the career is about social position or standing. It thus speaks to one's relation to others, and thus, in the hierarchical sense, one's relative importance in the order of things. It is about

being able to say you have the more senior position (relative to the next man - *sic*) and, as such, has a fundamental impact on identity - who (do) you think you are.

Thus, career success in the Bank is not just about the absolute of realising one's potential at all; rather, it is about one's *relative* success in comparison to others (e.g. immediate peer group). Thus, 'doing well' is operationalised in subjects' talk as: success is about how well I do versus you - my rank versus yours - how quickly I get promoted, compared to you.

Consequently, we see talk about one's progression versus the norm or the average. We see talk about subjects' perceptions of their positioning in the 'league table' - whether they are at the top, or "the next group down". And, very commonly, we see quite convoluted commentaries about the difficulties in the early years of understanding ones' capabilities, and envisioning one's likely future career trajectory because of the absence - at that stage - of a clear peer group reference point. It is as if individuals are saying: I don't fundamentally know how good I am - or could be - because I don't yet know how good you are !

Velocity

Linked to the notion of relative progression and, thus, ultimate success is a theme I want to call 'velocity'. Or, to be more specific, within the context of the broader (e.g. non-context dependent) discourses of success, betterment and so on, there is a particular discourse in the Bank of England which, again, seems to define its context. To unravel this discourse, we first need to refer back to themes outlined earlier.

As we have seen, career success in the Bank is said to be about hierarchical progression, the maximisation of potential, and relativity. As a result, it is also said to be about rank or status. It follows, therefore, that an important prerequisite to success is promotion; literally the degree to which 'the Bank' encourages or supports the individual's advancement to a higher office or rank.

As we saw in Chapter 5, subjects' talk around the theme of early career expectations illustrated the importance of promotion and, indeed, highlighted (regular) promotion as a fundamental component of 'the deal'. The question, therefore, which is of practical importance in unraveling this theme of velocity is: what happens when promotions are no longer a part of the deal ? In short, the answer, of course, is that individuals lose a sense of momentum or continuity: the career, in the classical sense, loses its evolutionary quality with the passage of time. Thus, the sense of moving

forward, which we heard is so important in the context of the Bank, disappears. The career just stops... or, at best pauses "before the next push up".

So, the next question is: what happens when the pause is not transitory, and there is no continuation or fast forward ? As we heard reported by one subject in particular, 'fear' sets in - or, more accurately, 'fear of getting stuck'. For some, this seems simply to imply a fear of delay, stalling or slowing down. For others it is reported as a kind of thwarting, a prohibition or obstruction. For still others it is said to mean, quite literally, the ending of the career, and thus we see much reference on the subject of future expectations to the notion that: 'if I don't keep moving up, I'll leave'.

One of the interesting questions, then, is why so few people do actually leave the Bank, even when they apparently have reached a plateau - be it on low or high and level ground. We would expect that a (transitory) pause might be tolerated, but a plateau - implying, literally, a stabilisation or a halting - would stimulate an exodus. But this is not really hinted at with any great conviction in subjects' commentaries. And herein, perhaps, lies the importance of velocity or, more accurately (as earlier) the pervasiveness and resilience of a subtle, yet complex, discourse of velocity.

To clarify the point we must turn first to what subjects say about the opportunity cost of a career in the Bank. In brief, many people talk about the sacrifices they are making by being at the Bank and, in particular, the premium City salaries and bonuses foregone by virtue of remaining loyal to the Bank. This does, of course, at one level probably mask the fact that some people simply wouldn't succeed in the City - after all, the culture of City institutions is *very* different to that of the Bank. However, as we saw in Chapter 5, a more plausible reason is that some individuals wouldn't want to have to compete on a performance-driven basis, and thus we hear, instead, a preference to compete on the basis of intellect ("tearing strips" off each other - academically).

A different reading of subjects' talk, however, gets us to the heart of the importance of velocity. That is, it is not really the prospect of competition based on non-analytical or intellectual criteria which is important to individuals, rather it is that - as with shares - City compensation packages can go down as well as up. There is, thus, no guarantee of continued hierarchical progression, especially where results, and not intellect *per se*, drive promotions. In the Bank, by contrast, when we hear subjects talk of their future career expectations there is an overwhelming sense of certainty, especially over time as they get a better understanding of 'where they stand versus the competition'. There is, thus, a sense that they are not just moving toward their aspired

destination rank, rather they are marching, striding, even accelerating toward it. This sense of forward motion, rhythm, or motive force is almost tangible in subjects' talk, and it conveys a sense not just of movement in the direction of the goal but, fundamentally, a *rate* of movement.

To emphasise the point here about the rhetorical (in the literal sense) power of this discourse we might question the symbolic importance to employees in the Bank of the fabled forty year career. On the surface it would be easy - (and, indeed, in the context of this thesis, convenient) - to view the forty year career as, in some way, an iconographic representation of the 'job for life'. Such a reading would naturally lead us to suppose that the attraction of the forty year career - (and thus, for some, the deep ontological crisis created by its apparent removal) - is security and tenure: both classic old deal metaphors.

However, it is more interesting, perhaps, to consider that the pledge or guarantee individuals have claimed the right to by virtue of entering into the deal has nothing to do with a guarantee of office or protection from harsh realities at all. Instead, it is because 'the forty year career' offers the compelling prospect of forty years' progression. Thus, in a sense, if the impact of the emerging new deal in the Bank has been to create broken memories of the past⁷⁴, then the gift horse individuals see cantering toward exit stage left is the promise of velocity - the perpetual certainty of motion in the direction of higher office.

The preceding three sections have sought to develop an integrated reading of the specific context and discursive dynamics of the Bank of England case study. In the next sections, a similar analytical approach is taken to the development of a reading of the context of IBM. In these sections, the theme of 'being a manager' is first considered, primarily as a way of unraveling the contextual specificity of key components of subjects' career stories in IBM. We then look at three further themes, which 'cut across' both organisations, though again to differing degrees. These themes are represented as: 'accommodating new realities', 'ownership' and 'customisation'.

Being a Manager

In the Bank of England case study we saw how the 'career as hierarchical progression' discourse creates very distinct and pervasive commentary on the importance of moving 'onward and upward' in search of continuous improvements in rank. This, as

we saw, was given added currency on account of the fundamental importance of 'doing well' versus peers. In IBM there is a similar concern to progress which is evident in subjects' talk, though not as deeply-rooted, and certainly not as frequently reproduced, as in the Bank. Thus, as argued earlier, we see that the discourse of betterment is a key feature also of the discursive landscape in IBM.

However, as we saw in Chapter 6, the nature of the IBM subjects' talk on these themes of betterment, progression and so on has a somewhat different flavour. It would not be true, for example, to claim that in IBM we see anything like the same level of concern with issues of destination rank for example but we do, however, see much talk of 'being a manager'. This is an allusion to the old deal in IBM and a time, as we have seen, where, in order to be successful in the company, one had to be a manager (of people) at some point. There was thus (and still is to some extent) a concern with the attainment of the office of manager. This is not, however, for the sake of seniority *per se* (though 'influence', 'stripes', 'kudos', or 'badges of worth' are much claimed reasons for wanting to be a manager). Instead, the concern to be a manager seems to be in greater measure to do with its symbolic value - as one speaker put it: "there *is* something about *saying* you're a manager". There is, thus, a very different flavour to the language around this theme than there was in the language of progression, status and rank which we saw in the Bank, and this, therefore, is again evidence of what I would point to as a context-specific manifestation of a somewhat 'larger' trans-contextual discourse.

The importance of 'being a manager' under the terms of the 'old' IBM deal is revealed to us very clearly as subjects go about the task of constructing accounts of their early career expectations. Thus we hear much talk about wanting to be a 'first line manager' in order to get on the first rung of the 'card holding manager line', and we hear subjects say (when challenged as to why they wanted to be a manager) that this was the only or most effective way they could see in IBM to 'get on'.

While, as we have begun to argue, IBM appears (at the time of this research) to have been emerging from the old deal and therefore embracing a new 'dawning reality', the importance of being a manager is enduring.

⁷⁴ I am indebted to Veronica Hope-Hailey for providing this metaphor, when in the latter stages of writing [24 January 2002] we were discussing how I might structure this final chapter.

Thus, even in the talk of those subjects who are clearly appropriating successfully the language of the new there is, from time to time, reference back to 'old IBM' and, in particular, to the notion that to get on you still have to be a manager at some point. In a sense, this is akin to the notion, in the Bank, that to get on you still have to 'do a tour'; develop all round central banking skills; and, thus, demonstrate Bank-wide utility. But this is as much an artifact of the past in the Bank as the notion of 'being a manager' probably is, 'in reality', in IBM.

We could, of course, argue that this is, again, indicative of a dynamic change environment, in which some things of the old are easier to let go of than others. In respect of the notion that 'in order to get on in IBM, you have to be a manager' this seems particularly resilient. This, at one level, is not surprising, since it has been the reality of the IBM career experience for many years, and thus it is not necessarily easy to embrace the language of the new and subscribe readily to the new career proposition, namely that you can be either technical or non-technical now, and still 'get on'. At another level, of course, we could put forward the proposition that this is, to some extent, another example of a deeply-rooted, integrated and resilient discourse which, therefore, we would not yet expect to have 'disappeared' from IBMers' discursive repertoires.

What is particularly interesting about this theme, however, is what it reveals to us about the way in which individuals are responding to the 'new' careers message: 'you can be technical or non-technical - IBM supports any career you want to develop'. That is, we see speakers take one of four different positions on this: i) I wanted to be a [first line] manager, and I still do; ii) I wanted to be a manager, but now I've changed my mind; iii) I'm technical - I'm resigned to the fact that I'm not going to be a manager; or iv) I'm technical - I'm not interested, concerned, or even curious to be a manager: "being a manager doesn't excite me; technical things do".

In order to unravel the reasons individuals speak in these terms, and the importance of these 'subject positions' to our understanding of the operation of the 'being a manager' discourse, we need to consider these positions for a moment, and speculate as to the performative and constructive effects they create. That is, as alluded to in Chapter 6, we need to be cautious about treating this commentary too transparently, and instead consider what speakers are 'doing' with their words.

First, while, as stated, we should be cautious when going 'beyond the text', it is of course plausible that each of the above positions - especially i) and iv) - are a transparently 'true' reflection of inherent attitudes toward technical/non-technical

careers. Thus, this talk could be a simple, representational act. However, as we saw on several occasions in Chapter 6, our initial readings of the data were improved somewhat if, instead, we suspended judgement on the 'accuracy' of speakers' claims.

Thus, the second position in particular - ('I wanted to be a manager, but now I've changed my mind') - is an interesting one when we ask the question: why might the individual have 'changed' her/his mind ? Again, as alluded to in Chapter 6, some people may have 'changed their mind' in light of what they now see as the new managerial career deal: long hours, compromise, sacrifice, and so on. Still others, of course, may be using this fundamental change in the terms of the deal to choose, by design (or default) to 'be' or 'remain' technical, because, as one speaker put it, 'deep down' he didn't feel he ever had the 'attributes' to be a manager, despite his vociferous claims to want to be a manager on entry to IBM. In either case, this would at least be evidence, perhaps, that individuals have begun to hear the messages of the terms of the new deal, have thought them through, and have perhaps taken a degree of 'ownership' for whatever conclusion they have come to.

The third position ('I'm technical - I'm resigned to the fact that I'm not going to be a manager') is also particularly interesting, not least in respect of its allusions to resigning to the fact that 'being technical' may mean the loss of what some speakers described as the 'trappings' of management. This seems particularly potent in light of the resilience of the symbolic importance of being a manager at some point, in order to 'get on'. Thus, talk of being 'resigned' to being technical might also be read as resignation that one's ultimate success will be somewhat less than would have been the case had one been on a managerial career track. This theme also points, therefore, to the fact that while the rhetoric of the new deal says: 'you can go anywhere, do anything, and IBM will support that', the enduring reality (at this point in IBM's new deal storyline) is that to be on the managerial track is still perceived in some senses to be 'better'. Thus, while this new vocabulary of choice and opportunity supports the new deal principle of career self determination, the degree to which individuals do or don't buy into that rhetoric still has consequences in terms of identity and, in particular, individuals' notions of the degree of career success (in relative terms) they will actually be able to achieve.

Thus, it may be that we are witnessing in the talk around these four subject positions evidence to support the notion that individuals in IBM are responding very differently to the emerging new deal and, in particular, the terms of the managerial career. This is a theme we shall return to later under the theme of 'accommodating new realities' when we look at what I am calling the 'customisation' of careers and identities.

In the meantime, there is one other theme which the above 'to be technical or not' issue illustrates for us, namely a distinct difference in the degree to which people are (or feel able to be) decisive about their preferred career route. This is a theme which is resonant, of course, of a theme we saw earlier in the Bank of England, where speakers seemed somewhat fearful (in the absence of perfect knowledge) of making the 'wrong' decision in case the consequence was a sub-optimising of future attained rank. In the IBM context, however, there is a sense that this is less to do with making the 'wrong' decision and more to do with wanting to make the 'right' decision (as we saw one speaker claim explicitly in Chapter 6).

We are looking, therefore, at two sides of the same coin, so to speak, but subjects' language choices on this issue do also say something about the difference between the two organisations. That is, in the Bank, people seem to be 'pulling back from' the reality of the new, whereas in IBM, we could argue, they are attempting to 'run to' the reality of the new. This is, therefore, a subtle, but important distinction which, albeit only to a minor extent, supports the emerging argument that we are seeing a quite different transition in IBM than in the Bank.

There is, however, a sense in the language choices of some of the IBM research subjects that they may not yet feel equipped to make fundamental decisions (to be technical or not). Equally, their language choices may be exposing, in some cases (as indicated in Chapter 6), that some people do not yet believe the rhetoric of the new deal will match the reality of how careers will be managed going forward - they remain, temporarily at least, sceptical that there won't be a time in the future when the rules change back again. In this situation, some individuals in IBM might then find themselves in the same position as some in the Bank apparently found themselves in, having chosen to de-skill and become generalists, only to find the pendulum swinging the other way. It may also suggest that the language of the new deal has only been partially appropriated, and thus some individuals literally do not yet have at their disposal a 'full enough' vocabulary with which to make sense of the new, and thence confidently 'escape' the clutches of the old.

Accommodating New Realities

A slightly different reading of some of the key points made in preceding sections points to the issue of how individuals actually come to terms with, or accommodate, new realities, and at the heart of this is the issue of ownership: that is, individuals'

abilities or willingness to assume a degree of responsibility for their careers, and thus truly 'possess' or 'own' the outcomes, effects, or consequences of their decisions.

This concept of ownership is at the root of the implications of the new deal; it is at the heart of the ability of individuals to come to terms with, to accommodate, the emerging new realities; and it is fundamental to the discursive resources of individuals - it is central to the vocabularies with which employees are able to make sense of these new realities and, subsequently, reconstruct careers (and identities) which are congruent with these new realities.

In order to unravel this key theme of 'accommodation', we first need to consider the key elements of the discourse of ownership which, to varying degrees, is present in the two case study organisations - as will be illustrated.

One of the key tenets of the new deals message of career self management/self determination is that it brings with it a requirement for individuals to 'take ownership' for their careers (as if, in the past, they had no responsibility whatsoever for determining their vocational destinies !). But the question is: what does 'taking ownership' look like ? What does it mean ? This is a theme which surfaced in the data on occasions in both organisations, and manifested itself as: 'career self management: great concept, but how do you do that ?'.

For all practical purposes, 'taking ownership' fundamentally means assuming responsibility for one's career choices, and the consequences of those choices, rather than leaving things either to others, or to chance. Thus, in effect, 'taking ownership' means assuming the lead role in the direction of one's career instead (in the case of the Bank) assuming 'Daddy' will do it for you; the passing of time will reveal the answers; or a strategy of opportunism will leave one best positioned to take advantage of opportunities as they arise (if indeed they *do* arise, as one of the Bank of England subjects pointed out).

Indeed, by extension of the new deal metaphor of 'care in times of trouble' (in the context of the employer-employee relationship), we could also argue that career self management is a fundamentally important responsibility of adulthood insofar as one's ability to remain continuously 'employable' is (for most of us) the only way a spouse, partner or parent can exercise her/his responsibilities of duty of care for her/his dependents. Thus, 'taking ownership' for one's career is more than mere rhetoric - it is, in reality, a very serious issue indeed !

However, as we have seen in both organisations, albeit to varying degrees, the research subjects have demonstrated in their talk around this theme (or the absence of talk around this theme - most notably in the Bank) something of an inability to make decisions, to make a judgement between choices. Thus, we see a lot of talk around whether to be an all round central banker (if that option still legitimately exists) or a specialist (banking supervisor or economist); whether to be a manager or 'be technical' in IBM; and, in both cases, effectively, between 'right' and 'wrong'.

The implications, of course, of making the 'right' decision are clear, namely that one will maximise one's potential, and achieve one's due rewards for effort and foresight. In the exchange of labour for the promise of betterment, a 'right' decision delivers what is legitimate, virtuous, or just plain fair. The implications of making the 'wrong' decision, by contrast, are that one might not attain one's desired rank, or will follow a path which is ultimately unrewarding in other ways. This is, perhaps, most pertinent where one chooses to go on a 'journey' in the direction of something, without ever really knowing what the destination is. In this case, there is (as we saw earlier) the very real possibility of never feeling like you've 'achieved' anything, and this brings with it potent consequences for one's sense of career self efficacy or, more fundamentally, social worth. Thus, making the 'wrong' decision leads to a sense of unjust, illogical or just plain bad outcomes.

These 'struggles' are, we can argue, quite understandable in the context of the Bank, where the deeply-rooted 'culture' of paternalism has served, for a very long time, to effectively remove individuals' skills in self determination. And, at the linguistic level, the enduring power relations which are a consequence of the parent-child discourse serve, effectively, to remove individuals' access to a more liberating vocabulary. However, in IBM, this dynamic is somewhat more puzzling, since the new vocabularies introduced on the back of the introduction of the Worldwide Professions - ('you can develop any career in IBM now') - certainly has a more liberatory or emancipatory quality, especially when the rider is added: 'and the company supports you in that'. It is certainly quite distinctive from the vocabulary of the Bank where, effectively, the bottom line message has clearly in some cases been heard as: 'manage it yourself'.

In the Bank it is easy to understand the dynamics of this apparent reluctance to engage in a discourse of ownership, namely the impact of a paternalistic 'culture' and an enduring, highly embedded discourse. In IBM, by contrast, the only logical explanation for this dynamic, it seems, is that it is an artifact of what Herriot, Hirsh & Reilly (1998) might point to as the consequences of a fracturing of mutual trust and

support in times of great transition, this on the back (as we have seen) of a lengthy period of downsizing in which, as one subject put it: "I started thinking about my job disappearing, and so that put a different emphasis on the career". Or, as one of the IBM sponsors put it: "[The] thing is they feel very let down and hurt because this dream we were living wasn't a reality, and so there's this thing that says: I'll never trust an employer again. The trigger for this was not an intellectual belief in a new and brighter world. The trigger for it was pain... the pain from reality dawning".

There are, thus, significant consequences inherent in the outcomes of an exercising of choice, both for the career and for identities. However, as has been argued, that is the essential feature of the new deals environment, and it is, in a sense, the 'price' one pays for the right to manage one's own destiny. Ultimately, however, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, since the new deal also confers upon individuals the right of customisation - the right to individualise one's career in whichever way feels 'right' or appropriate to one's circumstances. Indeed, outwith the above comments about the apparent reluctance on the part of some IBM subjects to apparently take on this notion (as 'revealed' in their talk), it is also fair to conclude that, in other notable cases (e.g. Ursula), the IBM research subjects were actively engaging in a process of redefining work career/life career goals and priorities and thus, we can argue, literally customising their careers and reconstructing their identities in the process.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

Introduction

As with any qualitative data there are, of course, many different readings one could apply to the data on view in Chapters 5 & 6. The task, however, for a discourse analyst is not only to identify and comment on the discourses which seem to be apparent (or absent) from the data under review, but also to construct a particular reading of that text which serves to provide 'useful' (and socially relevant) insights into the phenomenon under consideration [Burr, 1995; Parker 1992]. In my view, this is especially important in the context of career development which, from the perspective of practitioner interventions, requires that fundamental political and moralistic decisions be made about what is 'good' or 'bad' for individuals. Thus, in this respect, I unashamedly display my liberalism on this point, and align with Parker, Habermas and Foucault in wanting, ultimately, to be creating knowledge here which has an essentially emancipatory quality [see Habermas, 1972].

More specifically, again following Parker, the task is not only to comment on what people might be 'doing' with their words (the performative qualities of talk - see Potter & Wetherell, 1987); or on the constructive processes which the act of talking about one's career or oneself comprises (see Burr, 1995); but, also on the consequences of this talk (e.g. from the perspective of subject positions and power relations). These are themes which - to be reflexive for a moment - I have found incredibly difficult to deal with in the process of constructing this thesis. However, in the previous analysis of the key themes of Chapters 5 & 6, and the rhetorics and discourses which define them, I have attempted, insofar as my current ability (and vocabulary) allows, to draw these themes into the discussion, where it felt appropriate so to do.

The purpose, therefore, of the preceding sections has been, first, to draw together the 'observations' of the data outlined in Chapters 5 & 6 in a way which summarises the key themes of the data and provides clues as to the nature of the discursive environment in the context of the two organisations. And, second, to provide a platform to discuss, briefly below, a number of key issues around rhetoric, reality, context and discourse which are not only of relevance to the theoretical and methodological approach taken here, but also lie at the heart of unraveling the relevance of this kind of research to practitioners.

CONCLUSIONS

Defining the New Deal

In Chapter 1 the environmental factors which gave rise to the emergence of new deals were outlined, and it was argued that, in the main, the key forces for change were technological and economic. These forces, coupled with, for example, the forces of globalisation, de-regulation and intense price-led competition, served to create very different competitive environments. As a result, organisations came under unprecedented pressure to improve asset utilisation in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness and thus, in turn, profitability.

One of the key consequences of this shift of emphasis was the subsequently widespread practice of downsizing and delayering. As a result, the bureaucratic, multi-unit or divisionalised organisational form came under threat, and with it the notion of the bureaucratic organisational career - the dominant career form of (at least) the past hundred years or more. Thus, traditional career opportunity structures began to look somewhat misplaced in the context of this emerging reality: in short,

career management systems in many organisations no longer seemed to serve the needs of those organisations and, arguably, a revolution in career management began. Organisations could no longer manage or direct employees' careers with any degree of certainty and so, in effect, the right of self determination was 'given back' to the workers, epitomised by the clarion call: "manage your own career".

Thus, while by no means unanimously the case, there emerged a ubiquitous and compelling rhetoric about the demise of the 'old' career 'deal' and the rise of 'new deals' - a rhetoric which, over the course of the mid-late 1990s, took on the flavour of a universalistic 'truth'. It followed that where once we were assured we could have 'jobs for life', we were told careers were 'dead'. Where once we thought of careers as being bounded organisationally, we were told they were 'boundaryless'. And where once we were persuaded of centrally managed careers that represented sequences of work positions, connected by some logical or rationale, we were told they were now either lateral, horizontal or spiral and would not necessarily develop henceforth in any recognisably logical fashion. Thus, as Nicholson (1996:41) argues, we were witnessing an important transition from one career development paradigm to another.

It follows that academics and practitioners alike proclaimed the arrival of 'a new deal', this (in the UK at least) on the back of the publication of Herriot & Pemberton's (1995) *New Deals: A Revolution in Managerial Careers*. While some of the key messages of this particular text might now seem to have been misinterpreted⁷⁵, it is clear we were beginning to see the passing of formerly sacrosanct components of the relational contract between employer and employee and the emergence of a different, more transactional contract.

Thus, under the terms of the 'old deal' the individual offered loyalty in return for security of employment; conformity and commitment in return for training & development and career prospects; and trust in return for care in times of trouble. Under the terms of the 'new deal' much of this (it is argued) disappeared, and thus employers no longer offered security, prospects or care but, more simply (and perhaps more starkly) financial and non-financial rewards for performance and, at the end of the day, a job. The employee, on the other hand, was behoven to work long hours, assume additional responsibilities, develop a broader range of skills, and be tolerant of continuous change and ambiguity [see Herriot & Pemberton, 1995:17-20].

⁷⁵ Herriot & Pemberton did not argue that *the* old deal had gone, to be replaced by *the* new deal. Instead, they posited the emergence of a multiplicity of deals contingent on the matching of varied needs on the part of individuals and organisations.

These are the key elements of the much talked about 'new' and 'old' deal(s), the key feature of which is, thus, the shift from a relational to a more transactional contract between employer and employee.

New Deals for Old: Rhetoric or Reality ?

In beginning to draw this thesis to a close and, in the process, unravel the knowledge claims it is making, we must now re-visit the title of this thesis and deconstruct the assertions embedded within it.

The first question is: is it true to say that, at the time of this research, new deals were replacing old in each of the case study organisations: was it rhetoric, or are there signs of the emergence of a genuinely 'new' reality, supported, and beginning to be embedded by a shift in the discursive context of each organisation ? Second, the title of this thesis also alludes to the constructive power of language. Thus, the other question to consider is: to what extent can we argue that the new vocabulary served to stimulate a reconstruction of careers and identities, and does the data presented in this thesis lend any empirical weight to the force of our answer ?

Turning first to the Bank of England, in short, it seems from Chapter 5 there is some, albeit quite limited, evidence that the rhetoric of the 'new deal' was beginning to emerge. This was most notable in the talk of Luke: with his references to 'getting in touch' with career self management; the Bank needing to equip him for exit; no longer finding there was 'a place up there' available for him; in the notion of needing to develop portable skills; and in the need for a structure within which to help himself. More notable, as we have seen, is the enduring resilience of 'old deals' vocabulary, as manifested in what I have chosen to call the discourses of betterment, paternalism, relativity and velocity. Thus, there is considerable reference to progression up organisational career ladders; jobs for life / forty year careers; tenure / timeserve (stick around, do a good job and you'll get promoted); paternalism (they'll look after you if you work hard and comply / commitment on your part brings care on their part - a home for you somewhere); and security (intact).

It follows, therefore, that we can argue that a 'new deal' was only just beginning to emerge and, thus, career stories were still being (re)constructed on the basis of appeal to the vocabulary of old deals. It follows, also, that talk of career self management had the characteristic of 'mere rhetoric', and had not been superseded by an enduring alternative discourse.

Thus, to reiterate, our analysis in Chapter 5 seems firmly to suggest that, in the Bank, a new deal (in any resilient sense) was not yet evident, and certainly far from being embedded discursively.

By contrast, in the context of IBM it seems there is evidence of considerably more of what we might regard as the vocabulary of the new: hard work, sacrifice and compromise (in return for rewards); skill-building / developing the skills customers will buy (and keeping them current in order to maximise your marketability and value to internal and external customers); portability of skills; career as a journey (unrealised expectation in the direction of ultimate success ? versus career as status / the attainment of rank); contribution versus performance; putting things into perspective (seeing the bigger picture and understanding the new 'dawning reality'); and 'manage yourself' (the company can no longer do it for you). The vocabulary of the 'old deal', however, was still also in evidence: relative progression and financial success; a sponsor (someone pushing you / looking after your interests / helping you make the 'right' decision); impression management (being seen to be putting in the effort); playing the game and having a face that fits !

However, what does seem from Chapter 6 quite distinctly different is the evidence of speakers (e.g. Ursula) actively engaged in a process of reconstructing (post-rationalising perhaps) their past career in order a) to make sense of the present and b) to re-construct views of the future career which 'fit' with the 'dawning reality'

The question, then, is: is the talk of career self management mere rhetoric ? In short, it doesn't seem to be, at least not judging by the degree to which the research subjects have seemingly appropriated, to a much greater extent than in the Bank, the vocabulary of the new. This, we can argue, is perhaps not surprising since, as noted earlier, IBM had, by this time, done considerably more than the Bank to create a new infrastructure around the 'new deal' and, in particular it seems, had done more to actively 'manage' its discursive environment. In a sense, from the perspective of the change management literature, we could argue that this case study shows IBM to have been rather more successful than the Bank in creating what is, effectively, a *transformational* discursive environment (as opposed to the Bank's more 'frozen' discursive environment).

Thus, while we can argue that much of the early debate about new and old deals had something of a polemic or, at least, universalistic quality to it, the reality of the two case study organisations chosen for this research does seem to bear witness to a

transition in the nature of the 'rules of the career game', albeit at a somewhat different pace in each organisation.

Reflections on Practitioner Relevance

In Chapter 2 we saw Nicholson (1996) argue that, at the turn of the Millennium, we were witnessing the transition from one paradigm to another in career management. Indeed, this was, perhaps, the resounding, even unanimous flavour of the Academy of Management Executive special edition on careers that year. Thus we heard - (from the futurologists, polemicists and harbingers of doom) - much talk of the need for new career management practices for the 21st Century; career pandemonium, and the progressive destabilisation of relationships between people and organisations; and career systems in crisis.

On a less sombre note, outwith the AME paper, during the period 1995-1997, we heard of the need to recognise the multiplicity of new deals that emerging realities implied, and thus the concomitant need to focus on creating environments creative to new dealing; the need to recognise careers might now develop on more of a transactional basis, but that we should support employees in the spirit of partnership; and, of course, much talk of the 'new' philosophy of self-management and self determination (i.e. the emphasis on Protean careers).

All of this may well be quite legitimate and, from the perspective of many practitioners not working in a particularly sophisticated career management environment, these polemics may still yield value and leverage. However, returning to Collin (1995a,b; 1998), this just doesn't seem, to me at least⁷⁶, the way to go.

I would, of course, argue vehemently that, in the full passage of time, our descendants will look back to this era as, quite literally, the beginnings of a new *episteme* - as Foucault (1972) would put it. That is, a time in which we are seeing the emergence of new understandings of ourselves and our environment, and thus the emergence of a new era in our knowledge of ourselves. At the organisational level, too, I believe, this new *episteme* is becoming apparent but, as stated at the outset, I would strongly support Collin's general view that we need new ways of thinking about organisations, individuals and careers and so, fundamentally, we need more research of the kind represented in this thesis to 'release' us from our old assumptions, old paradigms and, literally, old vocabularies. When this happens, we will then truly be in a position to,

⁷⁶ From my perspective both as an academic (of sorts) and a practitioner (of necessity) !

as Voltaire (1694-1778) would have it, raise very useful questions of very potent force for practitioners and academics alike.

In the meantime, my learnings and reflections in the process of carrying out this research and, more specifically, the construction of this thesis, have led me to the following three general assertions of relevance to practitioners:

1. language, and discursive context in particular, plays a key role in the process of stimulating and sustaining organisational change, especially in the context of something so significant to us as our careers and the identities which those careers create for us. Therefore, in short, if we are in the business of managing careers, minds or change - (and there may not be much between the three in today's dynamic business environment) - we must 'get under the skin' of our existing discursive context and practices; hold it up to the light; and then actively seek to reconfigure it in ways that allow the language and symbols we use everyday in our organisations to create and manage change
2. language is fundamentally necessary but insufficient alone to embed sustainable culture change. While new vocabularies, if actively embraced, can create useful tensions from a discursive perspective, we also need to put infrastructures in place which support employees to 'take ownership' for their careers, and truly regain the agency which theorists tell us they have lost. Therefore, the focus must not just be on talk, ironically, but also on action (at the structural level)
3. the discursive practices (or linguistic 'behaviours') of the institution - e.g. the way in which senior managers operationalise careers rhetoric through HR policies and practice - is key, as is the willingness of the institution to develop truly sustainable, integrative and compelling new vocabularies. One utterance in the Bank ("no more forty year careers") doth not, like swallows, make a spring. Effective migration from one state to another (old to new) requires the embedding of *many* integrated utterances - by which I advocate words, signs, symbols, poetry, art, literature. In other words, customers buy skills, but employees buy powerful *images* of the future

Finally, in the spirit of a Voltairean reading of Parker (1992:18-19) I would assert, in all seriousness, the value in putting 'useful' questions 'out there' in the practitioner domain, namely: i) whose interests are served by the maintenance of old deals discourse; ii) what are its consequences for the subjects created by it ?; and iii) whose interests are subverted by the absence of the old or emergence of the new ? My own answers to these questions are still to emerge but, as with the research agenda outlined in the final section here, they are questions I actively intend pursuing !

REFLECTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Finally, I offer a few reflections, first on the nature of the research process; second, the limitations created by the particular philosophical, theoretical and methodological choices adopted herein; and, third, the contributions to knowledge which this thesis claims. And to conclude, I propose three particular areas for further research which, I would argue, serve to provide a significant and sustainable response to concerns in the career theory field that it is somewhat under-developed, both theoretically and methodologically [see Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989; Collin, 1998].

Reflections on the Research Process

The more I engage in the writing, reading and re-reading of this thesis, the more I am reminded of the old adage that clichés are not 'mere clichés' but, rather, the bearers of 'truth'. As such, my over-riding reflection as I write these last few words is that the more I have learned in this process - (and I feel it is a lot) - the more, sadly, I have learned I don't yet know. This is particularly true in the context of discourse analysis which, after seven years of trying to unravel it, I find is still, in parts, as impenetrable now as it was then. That being said, I have also been exposed to many new questions and, as a result, feel energised not to leave this thesis as a marker of my 'life's work' so to speak, but rather as an agenda for it. In that respect, the process of completing this research and this thesis has been, as I said in the Preface earlier, profound and, I speculate, enduring.

Perhaps above all, I have learned that research is not simple or neat. Instead, it is messy and complex. What I have attempted to do in this thesis, therefore, is simply hold a light over the phenomena I am interested in, so to speak and, through a gradual process of illumination, I hope, helped some of it to come to life !

More specifically, however, there are of course some things I would do differently next time or if I had my time over. First, I now appreciate more that, whether deliberate or otherwise, the researcher has the (linguistic) power to transform the situational understanding of the research subject, and may thus contribute directly to a raising of consciousness and reflexivity. Thus, as Potter & Wetherell (1987) argue, the interviewer's questions also perform a constructive function (they are not passive), and must also be analysed. In short, therefore, I would simply ask different questions and, indeed, if I were brave enough I would do as Mary-Jo Hatch once

suggested to me and ask but one question ("I'm researching careers, tell me about yours") and then keep quiet, and see where that took the 'conversation' !

Second, I now also appreciate that the author (or narrator)⁷⁷ is implicated in her/his particular reading of the data, and thus construction of the thesis (the 'story' of the research). As Hatch (1996:3) points out: "All description... all uses of language for that matter, involve cultural projection and therefore are not 'pure' or 'true' representations in the traditional scientific sense of being objectively unbiased"⁷⁸. Therefore, it seems to me that the act of reporting a research project is ultimately a constructive, narrative act or, as Van Maanen (1988) suggests, an exercise in telling 'tales' of the fieldwork. So, next time, or if I had my time over, I would wish to add a third dimension to this thesis and include a literature review chapter on 'the careers of stories' and then make more of the 'stories of career'. While I hope in Chapters 5 & 6 the reader has been supplied with much 'interesting' data, it is of course quite true that much more still resides in box after box here at home in my study, and I feel eager now to dig it all out again and see what I missed the first time around !

To issues of representativeness, generalisability and replicability I would, of course, defend vehemently that what I have done in this thesis is purposive and consistent with theory, generalisable at the theoretical or conceptual level and, in its methodological process, replicable. It is also equally true, of course, that the very nature of this kind of research places limits around (and thus creates challenges to) some of these notions, especially if the reader is not normally minded to work within a social constructionist/discourse analytic paradigm. However, putting aside that each interview / conversation, as I argued earlier, can be seen as a uniquely performative and constructive act, I do believe that the basic tenets of this thesis provide a powerful case that we are likely to be able to apply this reading to many different organisational contexts and, thus, surface a greater understanding of those contexts. Therefore, it is only really at the level of methodology that we can talk about replicability - i.e. we can talk of 'doing' discourse analysis in similar ways, but as Potter & Wetherell (1987) assert, this is, in practice, nigh on impossible.

Finally, the only other (equally important) thing I would do differently next time, or if I had my time over, is manage differently the expectations of my wife, family, friends and colleagues that far from being a simple and straightforward task, the PhD process is, as I outlined earlier, non-linear, messy and, at times, chaotic. And, in any event, is likely to take much, much longer to complete than one would ever have imagined !

⁷⁷ And, of course, the reader !

Contributions of the Thesis

This research has been designed to be exploratory and thus, ultimately, for the purposes of theory building. It points the way to a reconceptualisation of the notion of career which, on the one hand, recognises and embraces the value of traditional, social-psychological perspectives and, on the other, advocates the accommodation of 'new' discursive perspectives. It also demonstrates, from a methodological perspective, the value of contextualist-interpretivist approaches to the study of the subjective career.

More specifically, the thesis presented here contributes to two key areas: i) our understanding of the extent to which the "New Deal/New Reality" is a universalistic phenomenon; and ii) our understanding of the process(es) individuals engage in as they attempt to reconstruct their concept of career, and in so doing their self identity. The thesis makes its contributions by exploring data collected at a particular historical point in the New Deal storyline. In so doing it has contributed to i) by examining the specific nature of the Deal in two organisations, and to ii) by illuminating (to some extent) the process of reconstructing careers.

As outlined in the Preface, a developing, working hypothesis has underpinned the research, namely that we can theorise a process by which the old careers discourse is succeeded by a new careers rhetoric which, as it becomes embedded organisationally, then transmutes into a more resilient or enduring (sustainable) 'discourse of the new'. The data presented in Chapters 5 & 6, and discussed earlier in this chapter, make a contribution to our understanding of key stages of this process. In particular, this thesis has sought to expose those points at which individuals continue to anchor their careers (and identities) in the discourse of the old deal, and those points at which we can argue they are 'struggling' to accommodate the rhetoric/discourse of the new. In both cases, it has been argued that organisational context is a strong force which, to some extent, dictates what of the old can be given up and what of the new may be embraced.

Clearly, however, this thesis has only taken us so far in illuminating the mechanics of this process. It seems, therefore, that the continued value of this research and this thesis perhaps more likely lies in its ability to stimulate further research and writing in this area and, in particular, to support the continued need for contextualist-

⁷⁸ See also Vidich & Lyman, 1994.

interpretivist enquiry in the field. Below, therefore, I suggest three key avenues for further research:

First, contemporary analyses of career stories (in the same two case study organisations) in order i) to understand the degree to which the rhetoric of the new deal has transmuted into the discourse of the new, and become embedded; or ii) to understand the degree to which there is no longer a 'competition' between discourses at the organisational level and/or a 'struggle' to appropriate competing discourses at the individual level; and/or iii) to understand how people are drawing on such new discourse to construct careers and identities which are congruent with contemporary 'realities'.

Second, mapping the language of careers, in order i) to establish more clearly the predicates, root metaphors and 'categories' of career (following Potter & Wetherell, 1987); ii) to develop an archaeological or genealogical appreciation of career showing, in Foucauldian terms, its historical specificity (following Foucault, 1970; 1972 and Parker, 1992; 1996); and iii) to explore the application of literary theory and, especially narratology, to the understanding of the construction of career stories [following Parker, 1988; Hatch, 1996].

And third, further exploring the process of career and self-(re)construction, and exploring the impact of the new realities on (still) fractured self identities [in the tradition of Burr, 1995; Collin, 1995a,b; 1998; and Herriot *et al* 1998].

These, incidentally, are fields I now actively intend pursuing as I begin to create yet another career shift myself, and creep back into the world of academe !!!

SJA
22:57 hrs
30.01.02

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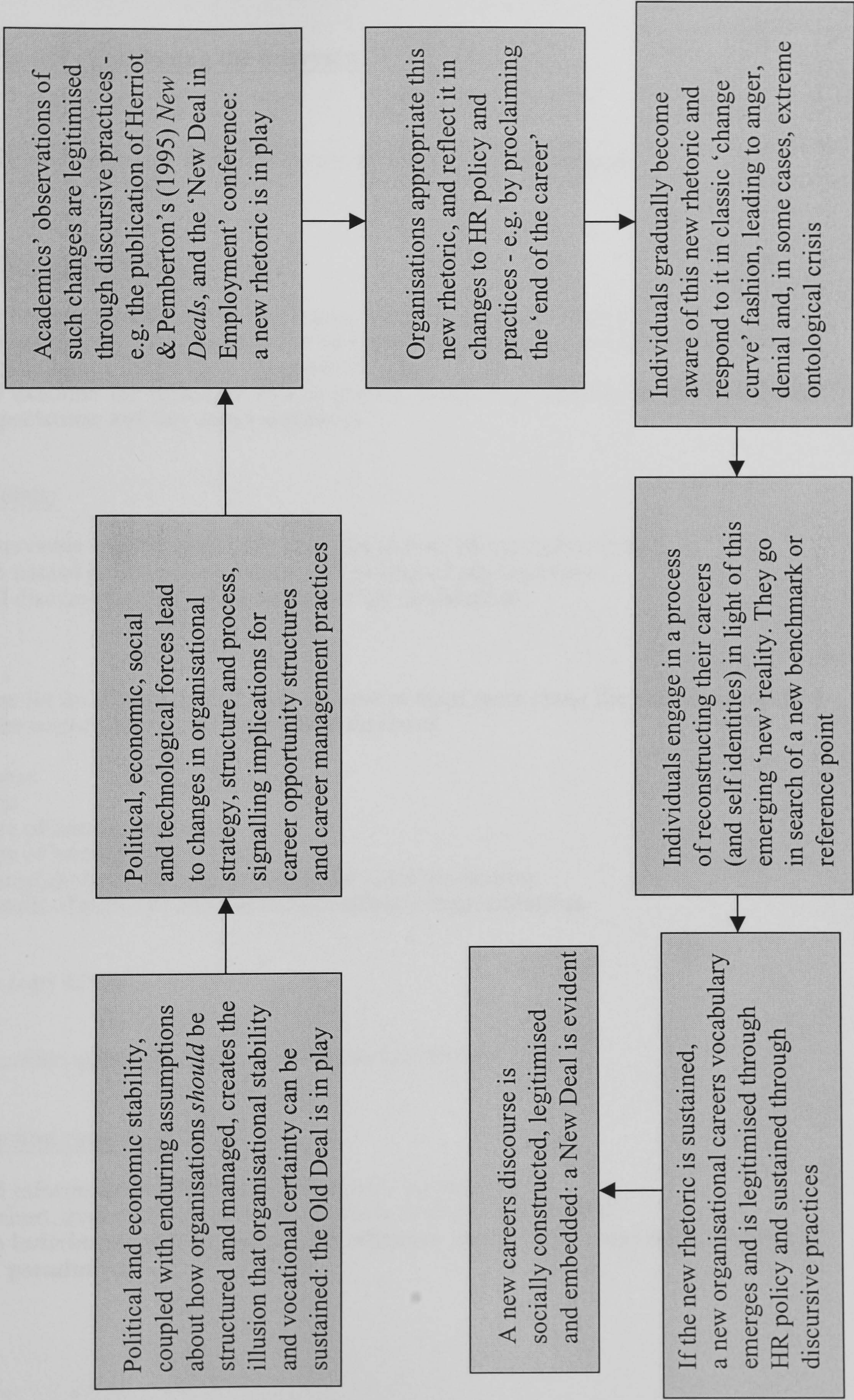
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Stages in the emergence of a new careers discourse



Interview Schedule

Notes to self - positioning the interview

Introductory comments about the nature and purpose of the research.

Stated key objectives:

- To understand the way in which your career to date has developed
- To understand your expectations on entry to employment, and to examine the way in which they might have changed over time
- To examine the influence of key people, events and experiences on your career expectations and key career decisions

Key Points:

- Interviews will be taped only as an aid to note taking and analysis
- No named or permanent record will be kept of any interview
- All discussions will be treated as strictly confidential

Request for brief biographical data in order to learn more about the interviewee and to steer the conversation in an appropriate direction

- Name
- Age
- Age of leaving university
- Age of joining first employer
- Name(s) of company(ies) worked for since graduation
- Details of previous and current position(s) / responsibilities

Check copy of CV.

Ten possible questions, built around seven key themes.

Concluding comments:

- All information will be treated as strictly confidential
- A short, anonymous report will be made available via NAME
- **No individuals will be named, or reference made to personal data, other than by pseudonym**

Questions

Work history

Perhaps we could start by reviewing your career to date. Could you please tell me who you've worked for and what you've been doing since leaving university ?

Note: Open-ended to allow interviewees to explain their CV.

Early career expectations (on entry to employment)

Looking back to when you left university and joined your first employer, can you tell me what expectations you had for your career ?

Early career expectations (1 - 3 years)

During the first few years of work, did any of those expectations change in any way ?

Significant people

Looking back over the past X years since leaving university, have there been any significant people in your life (inside or outside work) who have had an influence on your career ?

[If yes] Who, and what influence ?

Significant events and experiences

Looking back over the past X years since leaving university, have there been any significant events or experiences in your life (inside or outside work) which have influenced your career ?

[If yes] What have they been ?

Turning points, milestones or transitions

Looking back over the past X years since leaving university, have there been any significant turning points in your career ?

[If so] How would you describe those turning points ?

Future career expectations

As we sit here today, what are your expectations for the future: how do you see your career developing ?

Note: Questions 2 - 4 may need to be explored in depth through the use of closed-end and specific questions, depending on what the interviewee says.

PILOT STUDY PARTICIPANTS - ABBEY NATIONAL

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Number of Participants: | 5 |
| Gender Split: | 2 male / 3 female |
| Age Range: | 26 - 32 |
| Average Age: | 29 years, 7 months |
| Qualifications: | 3 (BA) 2 (BSc) DMS(2); DipM [plus MBA(2); DMS(1) in progress] |
| Organisations | |
| Worked For: | 1 - 4 (Average: 2.2; Norm: 1) |
| Years in Work: | 3 - 9 (Average: 6.9; Norm: 7) |
| Number of Jobs: | 3 - 8 (Average: 5.6) |

PILOT STUDY PARTICIPANTS - BANK OF ENGLAND

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Number of Participants: | 6 |
| Gender Split: | 3 male / 3 female |
| Age Range: | 28 - 33 |
| Average Age: | 31 years, 2 months |
| Qualifications: | 4 (BA) 2 (BSc) MBA(2); MPhil(2); MCIB |
| Organisations | |
| Worked For: | 1 - 3 (Average: 1.7 Norm: 1) |
| Years in Work: | 6 - 11 (Average: 8.4) |
| Number of Jobs: | 3 - 6 (Average: 4.5 Norm: 5) |

PILOT STUDY PARTICIPANTS - SHELL INTERNATIONAL

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Number of Participants: | 3 |
| Gender Split: | 1 male / 2 female |
| Age Range: | 28 - 30 |
| Average Age: | 29 years, 5 months |
| Qualifications: | 1 (BA) 2 (BSc) MSc; CIMA |
| Organisations | |
| Worked For: | 1 only in all cases |
| Years in Work: | 5 - 9 (Average: 6.7) |
| Number of Jobs: | 3 -7 (Average: 4.7) |

PILOT STUDY KEY THEMES - SOME NOTES

Note:

At the early stages of research, the analysis of themes (as below) did not take into account my later view on the dangers of treating language as a transparent information channel. Therefore, here, the themes are simply noted - as articulated - as if they were 'true' for the speaker. This gives us a broad, thematic understanding of the data. See also Adamson (1997).

Summary

- expectations change over time
- a number of phases and stages in the early career are apparent (see Adamson, 1997)
- early managerial guidance and support is critical
- graduates want early opportunities to demonstrate capability
- the terms of the psychological contract need to be made explicit
- there are issues of retention and return on investment for the organisation

- the conclusions of previous research seem to be supported
 - re: high (and arguably unrealistic) expectations on entry / reality shock after a short time (dashed hopes)
 - period(s) of (re)adjustment / socialisation (Crites, 1976)
 - changes in work-life career priorities in late 20s / early 30s - cf. Levinson *et al* 1978.
- expectations on entry seem to be governed to some extent by family background, education, and the attitudes/opinions of family and friends (speakers' choice of narrative structure and language may have an association with social, familial and other institutional discourses)
- three dominate expectations were spoken of: progression, variety of work, career opportunities

- early 'career success' is reported as a function of self concept/self esteem, confidence, support of good managers, task success – leading to confirmation of their abilities, recognition and reward for their efforts, increased visibility, increased responsibilities

- looking to the future, most subjects said they did not see themselves in their current organisations ! (why ? – reasons given were many and varied)

- good managers seem to be key, and were commonly cited as the most important significant other. Why ? Subjects say they offer support, guidance, encouragement etc. – i.e. to boost confidence

- subjects seemed somewhat confused about the shifts in emphasis re: terms of career management - they articulate concerns about whether their human capital is valuable any longer in the organisations

- there was a commonly cited and quite obvious dissatisfaction with the de-centralisation of career management (especially in the Bank): lack of a clear mechanism to talk through

career issues; some talked in terms of being alienated, left out in the cold, have to fend for themselves etc.

- if there is one thing many subjects said they would like to see at this time, it is an integrated HR/Personnel function which provides a sounding board for career concerns, guidance on possible future career directions, and an honest view of individuals' potential
- it seems the research itself has had a 'supportive' impact for many of the research subjects - and helped open up key questions !

Career & life phase/stage issues

- many spoke of having only very general expectations / unclear expectations on entry (though some were quite focused)
- much talk about progression, salary, status, responsibility
- reference to the importance of the nature of the work / esp. variety as career choice 'selling points' and retention
- much talk about the need for transparent career opportunities, within a culture of meritocracy
- post-entry: reality shock
- first few months: reconstructing expectations (process of socialisation)
- 2-4 years: adjustment to the realities of the deal on offer
- 4-6 years in: re-evaluation

Influence of people / line managers

- line managers consistently quoted as most influential (of all those both in work and in social domain)
- LMs are sources of encouragement, support and affirmation, thus boosting confidence and self esteem
- they are seen as 'gatekeepers of opportunity' and advice / role models to emulate
- peers, colleagues/co-workers next most influential
- most say that the peer group is not overly influential in the early years !
- spouse/partner, friends and family generally said to be of little significance, except prior to work (career choice influence); at critical events (decision-making influence); and in 'bad times' (shoulder/rock)
- something about different conversations with different people - subjects say they have qualitatively different discussions about their career with different people (this is consistent with the constructionist perspective -esp. re: performative qualities of talk)

Key events

- work tasks
- rights of passage (esp. career assessment/development events)
- career moves / promotions
- key meetings ? (good or bad)
- critical incidents are cited in the mid-late stages of early career development, and are often talked of as precipitating changes in attitude toward the organisation/the career

The telling of the story

- subjects speak of clearly identifiable 'stages' in the career, suggesting the impact of organisational socialisation, career timetabling, and rights of passage; as well as the impact of 'natural' developmental cycles/maturation processes - why ?

March, 1996

The Graduate Careers Research Project.

This research is seeking to address a number of issues concerning graduate career development. The first stage of the research begins in March, with subsequent stages due to take place in May and June.

As part of this research, you will be interviewed on two separate occasions, and will be asked to consider a number of issues regarding your career to date. The first interview will last up to 1.5 hours, whilst the second will take about 45 minutes.

The interviews will cover your career in general terms; your expectations on entry to employment, during your career and for the future; as well as a number of key turning points, events and influences on your career over the past ten years.

The interviews are to be carried out on a one-to-one basis. All discussions will be treated in strictest confidence. In order to carry out data analysis, the interviews be tape-recorded. Once transcriptions have been completed and coded, all tapes will be erased, and no permanent record will be kept which in any way links transcripts to named individuals.

In preparation for the interview, please complete the attached questionnaire, and return it to NAME by 11 March. Please attach a copy of your curriculum vitae.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. I feel sure that you will find the interview process both interesting and useful to you.

I look forward to meeting you in the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen J Adamson
Doctoral Research Student

Graduate Careers Research Project.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire.

Stephen J Adamson

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Telex 826559 CITMAN G
EMail - s.adamson@Cranfield.ac.uk

March, 1996

Strictly Private and Confidential

Instructions.

This questionnaire has been compiled solely for the purposes of gathering essential biographical information prior to your forthcoming interview.

The information requested will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Please return the completed questionnaire to NAME **by 11 March.**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

Biographical Details.

Name

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Gender | Female [] Male [] |
| Date of Birth | ..... |
| Age at next birthday | ..... |
| Year of graduation (first degree) | ..... |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| First degree e.g. BA / BSc , etc. | ..... |
| Subject | ..... |
| Name of institution | ..... |

| | |
|--|-------|
| Second degree e.g. MA, MBA, MPhil, etc. | ..... |
| Subject | ..... |
| Name of institution | ..... |

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Professional qualifications | ..... |
| | |
| Other qualifications | ..... |

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Marital Status | Married [] Single [] Partner [] |
| Number of children | none [] |

Curriculum Vitae.

Year of entering full time employment
Total number of years in employment since graduating
Number of positions held since graduating
Number or organisations worked for since graduating

Please provide below a brief summary of your work history:

| Organisation | Dates | Job / Role | Job description |
|--------------|-------|------------|-----------------|
| | | | |
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| | | | |

**Please attach a current or recent copy of your CV
in addition to completing the above. Thank you.**

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE
& INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

MAIN FIELDWORK

ORGANISATION

Interviewee ID Number:

Date:

Time:

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|-----|-------|----|-------|
| <u>Enclosures:</u> | Bio-Q | yes | [] | no | [] |
| | CV | yes | [] | no | [] |

Notes:

Actions:

Introduction

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----|--------|----|--------|
| <u>Check:</u> | Covering Letter | yes | [] | no | [] |
| | Bio-Q | yes | [] | no | [] |
| | CV | yes | [] | no | [] |

Process: Two-stage process (this is stage 1)
 Up to 1.5 hours
 Tape recorded

Confidential

We're going to talk about your career - what you've been doing since you left university; how it all fits together; and how you feel about that.

I will also be asking you to reflect upon your personal development, both inside and outside work, and about changes in the organisation.

We'll finish the interview by looking to the future, and talking about how you see things developing for you.

Is that OK ?

Question 1.
University / Pre-Work.

Can we begin by talking a little about your time at university ?

Tell me what you did, which course, and also about your hobbies and interests, your circle of friends, and so on.....

Give me a feel for what your time at university was like.

Question 2.
Career Expectations at University.

Looking back to when you were at university, what expectations did you have for your career ?

Additional Questions:

Did you have clear / specific expectations ?
Were you sure / unsure about what you wanted ?
What did you think the world of work would be about ?
What did you think an organisational career would be all about ?
What did you think your career would involve ?
How did you think your career would develop ?
What were you looking for / what did you want ?
Did you have any specific ideas about your movement in the organisation ?
Were you interested in status / position / rapid progression / a high salary etc. ?
Were you interested in professional qualifications ?
Did you want to be a specialist / generalist ?

Question 3.
Career Decisions.

Tell me how you decided which sort of career to pursue.

Additional Questions:

What sort of work were you looking for ?
Were you sure / unsure about what you wanted ?
What influenced that decision ?
Did anybody influence that decision ?
When did you make the decision ?
How did you come to choose X ?

Question 4.
Overview of Curriculum Vitae.

NOTE: explain that although I have a copy of the interviewee's CV, I want to see how they describe it in words:

Could you describe for me, in your own words, what you've been doing since you left university.

What does your career look like so far ?

Additional Questions:

Can you describe what your CV looks like ?
How does it all fit together ?
How would you describe what's happened in your career ?
Who have you worked for ?
What kinds of jobs have you been doing ?
What positions have you held ?
In general, how do you feel about your career ?

Question 5.

Expectations on Entry to Employment.

When you joined X, what expectations did you have for your career ?

Additional Questions:

What did you think your career would be about ?
How did you think your career would pan out ?
What were you expecting from the world of work ?
Did you have any preconceived notions about work ?
When you joined X, what did you want ?
What were you looking for ?
Did you have any particular ambitions ?
Were you clear about what you were looking for when you arrived ?
Were there things that you were driving for ?
How far / high up did you think you might go ?
How big a salary did you think you might have ?
Were you aiming to be a specialist / professional ?
What were your aspirations ?
What were your impressions of the company ?
Did you have a clear idea of what the company was about ?
What did you think X would be like ?
How did you feel about your career at that time ?

Question 6.

Changes in Expectations Over Time.

Moving on in time, did your initial expectations change in any way ?

Additional Questions:

If so....How was that ? Why was that ? When was that ?
What were your impressions versus day one ?
Was it what you expected ?
What were your thoughts versus the first few months ?
How did you feel about the world of work at that time ?
How did you feel about what you were doing at that time ?
Had you adjusted to the world of work / that job / etc. ?
Did your expectations change significantly ? If so...what drove that shift ?
Did your ideas about work change in any way ?
What impact did this change have on you / your attitude toward work ?
How did this affect you ? How did you react ?
Describe that transition...how did that come about ?

Question 7. **Significant People.**

Have there been any significant people, either inside or outside the workplace, who have in some way had an influence on your career ?

Additional Questions:

Have there been.....on the direction of your career / on your thinking about your career / on your attitudes toward your career / on your goals and ambitions ?

Who's driven that change ?

Can the influence be pinned down to specific people ?

Is there one person above all that's had an impact on you ?

Is there anyone now involved in your career thought process ?

Would you describe their influence as significant ?

Have the attitudes / values of your friends / family / peers etc. influenced you ?

Have your friends / family etc. influenced your career direction ?

Have people in your social circles had an influence on your career ?

Do you look at what other people are doing in their career ?

Do you talk with friends / family / colleagues about career-related issues ?

How has X influenced you / your career etc. ?

Has their influence been positive or negative ?

Has X in some way fulfilled the function of role model / mentor ?

In your circle of friends, has anyone had a similar career experience to you ?

If so... has this had an influence on you ?

Will there be any significant people who will influence your career in the future ?

Question 8. **Events, Experiences, Milestones, Turning Points.**

Have there been any significant events or experiences over the past X years that have had a key impact on your career ?

Additional Questions:

Have there been any significant turning points / milestones in your career ?

Are there things that have happened at important junctures ?

Are there events you look back on and think: *That was a turning point / That was significant* ?

Could you label particular phases / stages in your career ?

Have there been any events that have forced a change of career direction / reinforced the same direction ?

Do you recall any key moments when your career ideas shifted or changed ?

Could you pinpoint that change of attitude to a certain time / event / experience ?

Was there a particular event / experience that sparked that change ?

Did [event] have an influence on the way you felt about work ?

Did your experience of [event] have an impact on the way you felt about that ?

How did [event] impact you ?

How did you feel about that ?

Was [event] significant ? If so...how / why ?

How about [event]...would that have had an impact do you think ?

Did that influence the way you felt about your longer term future in X at that time ?

What was the impetus behind that ?

What has driven that change ?

What impact has that had on your attitudes toward what you are / were doing ?

Would you describe the influence as significant ?

Will there be any significant events that will shape your career in the future ?

Question 9.**The Current Organisational Context.**

Tell me a little about what's been happening in X in recent years in terms of structure, culture and so on.

Additional Questions:

Have there been any changes in terms of career policy ?
 What is the organisation saying about future careers in X ?
 What does a career in X look like nowadays ?
 Have there been any changes in terms of management development programmes / career development programmes ?
 What is X saying to new recruits / new graduates ?
 How is your performance monitored (versus previous years) ?
 What are you expected to achieve (versus previous years) ?
 What sorts of changes are taking place ?
 Why are these changes taking place ?
 How are these changes taking place ?
 Who is involved in the changes ?

Question 10.**Reaction to Current Circumstances.**

Tell me how you feel about these changes / the current situation in X.

Additional Questions:

Have these changes affected you ? If so...how and why ?
 How are you reacting to these changes ?
 Will the changes / current circumstances force a career decision ?
 Do you see opportunities for yourself in X in the near future ?
 Are you concerned about your career direction ?
 What do you think a career in X is all about these days ?
 Do the changes make sense to you ?
 How do you account for the changes ?

Question 11.**Future Career Expectations.**

As we sit here today, what sorts of expectations do you have for your career in the future ? How do you see things developing ?

Additional Questions:

Where do you think you might be heading in the future ?
 What do you think might happen ?
 Where do you see your future ? Why do you think that ?
 What are your thoughts about the future ?
 Have you thought through / are you thinking through what you might do next ?
 What are your expectations ?
 Do you see opportunities for you in X in the future ?
 Do you foresee any critical decisions coming up ?
 How do you see your career developing inside X ?
 How do you see the next few years in X ?
 Do you foresee a long term relationship with X ?

How might your career develop outside of X ?
 If what X is looking for and what you're looking for don't match, what will you do ?
 What is the most likely thing to happen ?
 Would you wait for something to happen or engineer a job change / career shift ?
 If you did move, to what kind of organisation / function would it be ? Why ?
 What are your long term career ambitions ?
 Are you concerned about your future career direction ?

Question 12.

Life Dreams / Ideal Career.

If you had a blank sheet of paper and could do anything at all, what would you do for a living ?

Additional Questions:

If you absolutely knew you could not fail, what would you do for a living ?
 What would your ideal job / work situation / organisation / career be ?
 What sorts of career options do you have ?
 What direction might your career take in the future ?
 Is there one thing you fancy doing at some point in the future...if so, what?
 If you were financially secure, what would you do with your life ?
 What would you be doing if you had no ties or obligations ?
 Do you have any long term ambitions in life ?
 Looking ahead a few years, what do you see happening in your life ?
 If you considered doing something completely different, what might that be ?
 Is there a radical option ? If so...what might it be ?
 Do you feel satisfied having done X [e.g. qualification] ?
 Is there something else you want to do [e.g. qualification] ?
 If you were made redundant / had to leave X, what would you do ?
 If your needs and X's needs no longer matched, what would you do ?
 Would you wait for something to happen or engineer a change ?
 Give me some background on that option...why that ?
 Why would that [option] appeal to you ?
 What are the chances of you doing something like that ?

Wrap-Up.

Is there anything I have missed ?
 Is there anything you would like to add ?
 Is there anything that needs clarifying ?
 Do you have any questions ?

Explain the next Stage in the Process.

THANK YOU !

APPENDIX 7

April, 1996

The Graduate Careers Research Project.

Dear

Further to our recent meeting, thank you again for agreeing to take part in this research. I hope that you found the first interview interesting and useful, and that you will be able to participate in stage 2.

The purpose of this letter is to explain what the next interview will involve.

In brief, the second interview will follow broadly the same pattern as before. That is, we will spend about one hour discussing your career. As previously, I will need to tape record our discussion, and I will therefore be observing the same rules of confidentiality and anonymity.

I have one key objective for this interview, namely to ask a few follow-up questions based on our previous discussion. As such, this second interview will be somewhat less structured than the first. I would therefore also like you to see the interview as an opportunity to add to your previous comments, tell me about your thoughts since we last met, and perhaps reflect upon what the ORGANISATION might do differently, in the context of career development, now and in the future.

NAME will be contacting you again shortly to arrange a convenient time for us to meet. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me.

I look forward to meeting with you again soon.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen J Adamson